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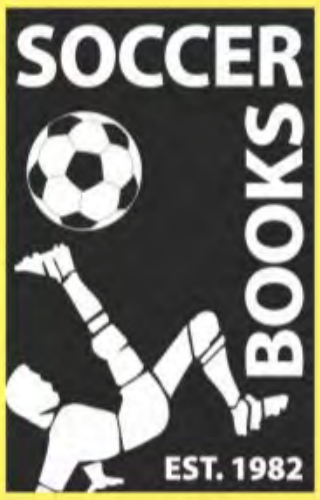

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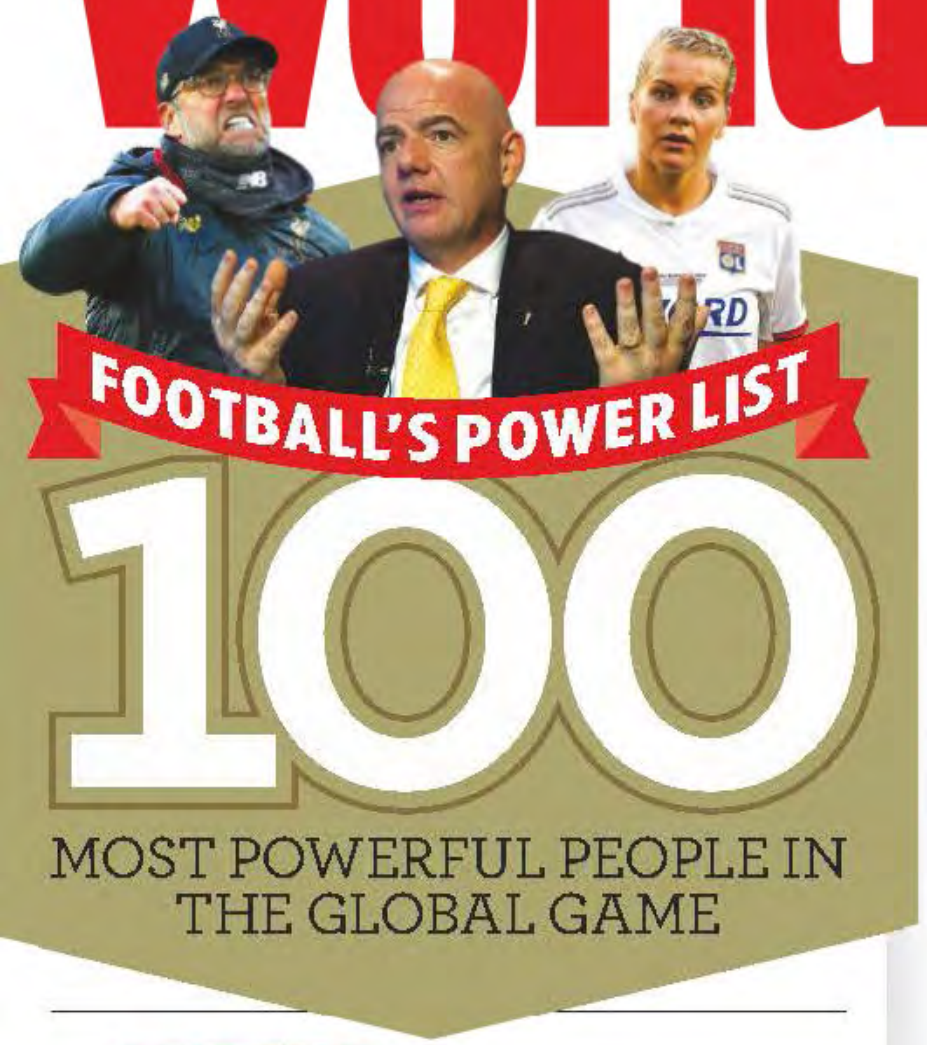


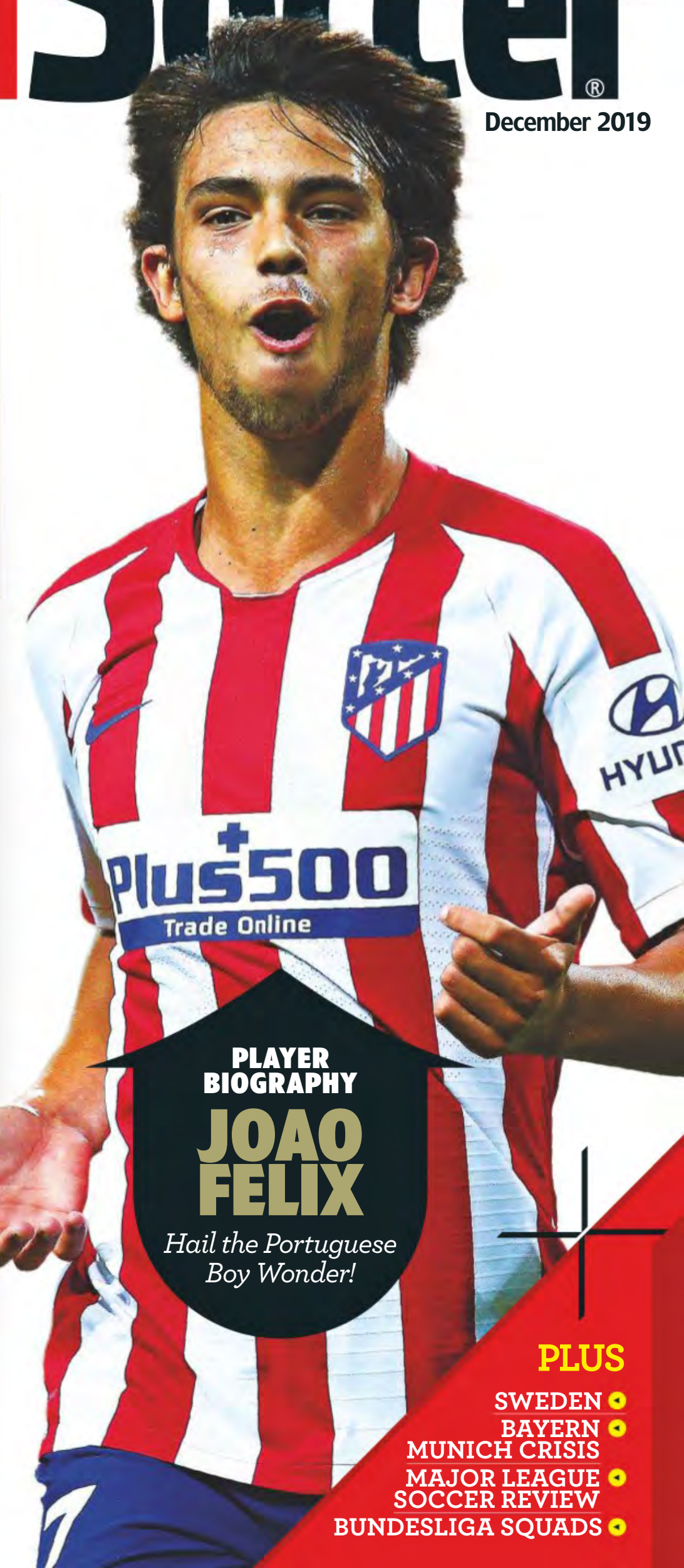
EURO 2020 FINALS DRAW

Everything you need to know

EYEWITNESS

WEST BANK WANDERERS

Football in Palestine



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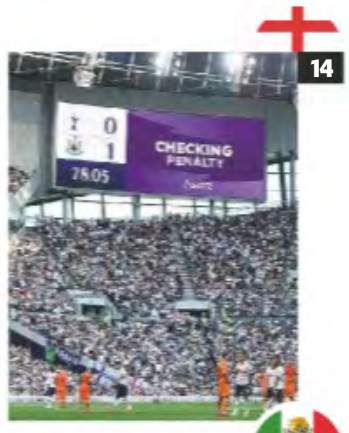

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The global game caught on camera

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EL SALVADOR...a Motagua fan is subdued by riot police during a CONCACAF League match against Allianza

ARGENTINA...Boca Juniors' Mauro Zarate is shielded as he prepares to take a corner away to Lanus

USA...Seattle Sounders keeper Stefan Frei celebrates winning the MLS Cup

HOLLAND...Jari Schuurman of Dordrecht shows his frustration during a game against Roda JC

AUSTRALIA...Jason Hoffman of Newcastle Jets gets the better of Western United's defence

TURKEY...Holland's Desiree Van Lunteren (left) competes with Selen Altunkulak of Turkey

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FROM THE EDITOR

Growing up in the UK, my annual calendar has always run the same course as the football season, from August through to July. That's the case for most of Europe. But in the rest of the world, football follows the regular year from January to December and this month we can begin our annual review of the non-European seasons.

There's the Major League Soccer season to review (page 68) as well as the Under-17 World Cup (page 76) in Brazil and the Copa Sudamericana Final (page 72). Unfortunately, our monthly deadlines prevent us from reporting on the Copa Libertadores Final, relocated to Lima in Peru following the street protest in Santiago, Chile, and the Asian Champions League Final.

> Voting is about to close in our annual poll – the longest-running awards vote of its kind in the global game

They will have to wait until the next issue, when we will also review the Brazilian national championship and other regular-calendar leagues.

It's also that time of the year when we prepare to bring you our annual Awards. By the time you read this, voting will be about to close in the poll for the World Player, Manager and Team of the Year, the longest-running awards vote of its kind in the global game. See you then.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Finland qualify for Euro 2020 ..... p28
2 Independiente del Valle win Copa Sudamericana p72
3 Seattle Sounders claim MLS Cup p68
4 Brazil are under-17 world champions p76
5 Bayern part company with Niko Kovac p22
6 Tottenham sack Pochettino, hire Mourinho p24
7 Luis Enrique returns as Spain coach p25
8 Arsene Wenger joins FIFA p16
9 Taison case highlights racism in Ukraine p10
10 Carlos Vela named MLS player of the season p26

Distraught...Taison (right) leaves the pitch

UKRAINE

Taison suspended for racism protest

Ukrainian football's governing body is facing calls to overturn a one-match ban handed to Shakhtar Donetsk's Brazilian Taison after he was sent off for reacting to racist abuse from opposition fans in a game against Dynamo Kiev.

"We are very disappointed by the decision," players' union Fifpro said. "Sanctioning a victim of racial abuse is beyond comprehension and it plays into the hands of those who promote this kind of disgraceful behaviour."

The Ukrainian Association of Football also fined Dynamo Kiev £16,000 and ordered them to play one match behind closed doors.

Taison and Brazilian team-mate Dentinho were both targets of monkey chants and racial abuse throughout the match and a stadium announcement was made calling on supporters to stop the chants.

In the 77th minute, after Taison had gestured towards Dynamo fans and kicked a ball at them, the referee took the players off the pitch, in line with UEFA protocol. When they returned five minutes later, Taison was dismissed and the match restarted.

"UEFA has missed an opportunity. The current sanctions, however tough UEFA think they may be, are clearly not working"

Campaign group Kick It Out on the weak punishment handed to Bulgaria for racist chants aimed at England players during the Euro 2020 qualifier in Sofia

Picture: Oleksandr Osipov/AP/Shutterstock

Taison was in tears as he left the pitch and later said: "My tears were of indignation, repudiation and helplessness; helplessness that I could do nothing at that moment. But we are taught very early to be strong and to fight; fight for our rights and for equality.

"My role is to fight, to beat my chest, to lift my head and keep fighting always.

"In a racist society it is not enough not to be racist, we must be anti-racist. Football needs more respect, the world needs more respect."

UAF president Andriy Pavelko said: "The racism against Taison is not ordinary hooliganism, it's a criminal act which could result in imprisonment for between three to eight years. ."

Taison's red card followed recent incidents of racism at games in Bulgaria and Italy.

Bulgaria were ordered to play two matches behind closed doors as punishment for fans aiming monkey chants and Nazi salutes at England's black players throughout October's Euro 2020 qualifier in Sofia. Match officials gave England players the chance to abandon the match but they opted to carry on.

In Italy, Brescia's Mario Balotelli kicked the ball into the crowd and attempted to leave the pitch during the second half of a Serie A match at Verona after he was targeted by racist abuse.

Gavin Hamilton

HEROES & VILLAINS

Loyal...Dresden fans in Berlin to watch a cup game

DYNAMO DRESDEN FANS

More than 30,000 of their supporters made the 125-mile trip to Hertha Berlin to see the team lose on penalties in the second round of the German Cup.

TIMO WERNER

The RB Leipzig star became the first player since the turn of the millennium to manage a hat-trick of both goals and assists in the same Bundesliga game, being involved in six of his side's goals in an 8-0 win against Mainz.

Support...Gianluigi Donnarumma

GIANLUIGI DONNARUMMA

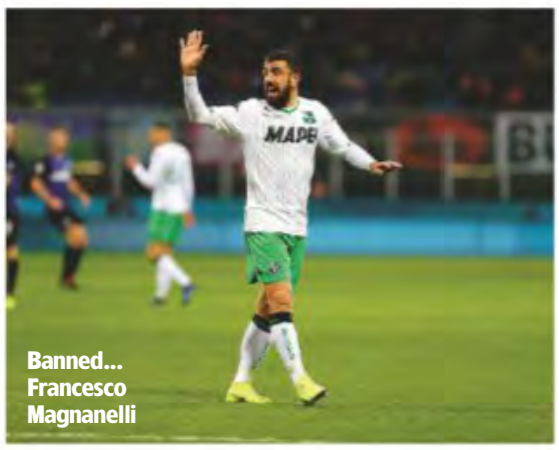
The Milan goalkeeper showed support for the victims of the Venice floods when he visited the city and met local people as part of an Italian Football Federation delegation.

ADA HEGERBERG

The Lyon striker became the highest scorer in Women's Champions League history with 53 goals in 50 appearances, surpassing the 51 previously set by Germany's Anja Mittag.

VERONA

The Italian club were ordered to close part of their stadium for one game following racist abuse of Brescia striker Mario Balotelli, who threatened to walk off the pitch during his side's 2-1 defeat.



Banned... Francesco Magnanelli

FRANCESCO MAGNANELLI & MATTEO SCOZZARELLA

Sassuolo's Magnanelli and Parma's Scozzarella were given one-match bans after they were shown on TV making blasphemous remarks in separate incidents during Serie A matches. There is a strict ban on taking God's name in vain in Italy and the Italian FA have clamped down on players heard doing so in recent years.

JAMAL MALINZI

The former Tanzania federation boss was banned for 10 years from all football activity by FIFA for misappropriation of funds and falsifying documents.

DAVID ABRAHAM

The Eintracht Frankfurt captain was sent off and subsequently suspended for seven games for barging over Freiburg coach Christian Streich when the ball was out of play in added time of their Bundesliga match. In the ensuing brawl, Abraham also came to blows with Freiburg's Vincenzo Griffo, who also saw red.

Shove...David Abraham clashes with Christian Streich

"We told Neymar, 'you're going to a golden prison'"

Gerard Pique reveals the message Barcelona players gave their former team-mate when he moved to Paris Saint-Germain

Gabriel VERON

(Brazil)

When Brazil won the under-17 world title (*see page 76*) it was a victory for a pragmatic side that put team ethics ahead of individualism – with the notable exception of the Palmeiras winger, who won the Golden Ball as the tournament's best player.

The teen scored three and provided two assists during the tournament, as well as drawing the foul for the penalty that drew his side level in the Final.

Before moving to Sao Paulo to join the Palmeiras academy, the teenager – who is named after former Argentina midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron – had dreams of becoming a cowboy.

"That's my father's profession," he explains. "He's a ranch hand who takes care of cattle and horses. He works in the countryside, and I tried to do the job alongside him but just couldn't.

"Fortunately, my mum kept encouraging me to pursue a career in football."

AMAD TRAORE
(Atalanta)
The Ivorian teen scored on his Serie A debut, against Udinese, followed by two assists in a win over Fiorentina.

CLAUDE PUEL
(Saint-Etienne)
The ex-Leicester City boss enjoyed an unbeaten start to his return to France, winning four out of five Ligue 1 matches.

SERGINO DEST
(Ajax)
The Dutch-born full-back committed his international future with the USA.

DANI OLMO
(Dinamo Zagreb)
The ex-Barcelona midfielder scored on his senior debut for Spain, against Malta.

RODRYGO
(Real Madrid)
The 18-year-old grabbed a sensational hat-trick in his club's 6-0 thrashing of Galatasaray in the Champions League.

GABRIEL BARBOSA
(Flamengo)
Put his unhappy spell at Internazionale behind him with a series of impressive performances for Flamengo.

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

OCTOBER 2019

SEASON RANKINGS

Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Marc-Andre TER STEGEN (Barcelona)	13
Samir HANDANOVIC (Internazionale)	3
Jan OBLAK (Atletico Madrid)	3
ADRIAN (Liverpool)	1
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	1
EDERSON (Manchester City)	1
Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich)	1
Andre ONANA (Ajax)	1
Kasper SCHMEICHEL (Leicester City)	1
Rui SILVA (Granada)	1

DEFENDERS

Trent ALEXANDER-ARNOLD (Liverpool)	9
Virgil VAN DIJK (Liverpool)	8
Andrew ROBERTSON (Liverpool)	7
Stefan DE VRIJ (Internazionale)	6
Mats HUMMELS (Borussia Dortmund)	5
Ben CHILWELL (Leicester City)	4
Diego GODIN (Internazionale)	4
Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus)	3
Benjamin PAVARD (Bayern Munich)	3
Ricardo PERREIRA (Leicester City)	3
Nicolas TAGLIAFICO (Ajax)	3
Achraf HAKIMI (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Renan LODI (Atletico Madrid)	2
Salif SANE (Schalke)	2
Stevan SAVIC (Atletico Madrid)	2
Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Milan SKRINIAR (Internazionale)	2
Chris SMALLING (Roma)	2
Caglar SOYUNCU (Leicester City)	2
Kieran TRIPPIER (Atletico Madrid)	2
Yunis ABDELHAMID (Reims)	1
Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	1
Marcos ALONSO (Chelsea)	1
Juan BERNAT (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Antonio CANDREVA (Internazionale)	1
Aurelien CHEDJOU (Amiens)	1
Juan CUADRADO (Juventus)	1
DAVID LUIZ (Arsenal)	1
Ruben DIAS (Benfica)	1
Victor DIAZ (Granada)	1
Nico ELVIDI (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1
FERNANDINHO (Manchester City)	1
Joshua KIMMICH (Bayern Munich)	1
Presnel KIMPEMBE (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Robin KNOCHE (Wolfsburg)	1
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Roma)	1
Ibrahima KONATE (RB Leipzig)	1
Kalidou KOULIBALY (Napoli)	1
Clement LENGLET (Barcelona)	1
Joel MATIP (Liverpool)	1
Willi ORBAN (RB Leipzig)	1
PEPE (Porto)	1
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	1
Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	1
Nelson SEMEDO (Barcelona)	1
John STONES (Manchester City)	1
Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	1
Kyle WALKER (Manchester City)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Kevin DE BRUYNE (Manchester City)	12
Angel DI MARIA (Paris Saint-Germain)	12
Stefano SENSI (Internazionale)	6
Miralem PJANIC (Juventus)	5
Youri TIELEMANS (Leicester City)	4
Marcelo BROZOVIC (Internazionale)	3
Ilkay GUNDOGAN (Manchester City)	3
Georginio WIJNALDUM (Liverpool)	3
Philippe COUTINHO (Bayern Munich)	2
Amine HARIT (Schalke)	2
Wilfred NDIDI (Leicester City)	2
Martin ODEGAARD (Real Sociedad)	2
Hakim ZIYECH (Ajax)	2
ARTHUR (Barcelona)	1
Laszlo BENES (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1
CASEMIRO (Real Madrid)	1
Santi CAZORLA (Villarreal)	1
Frenkie DE JONG (Barcelona)	1
FABINHO (Liverpool)	1
FELIPE ANDERSON (West Ham United)	1
Emil FORSBERG (RB Leipzig)	1
Alexander GOLOVIN (Monaco)	1
Papu GOMEZ (Atalanta)	1
N'Golo KANTE (Chelsea)	1
Toni KROOS (Real Madrid)	1
Mason MOUNT (Chelsea)	1
Lucas OCAMPOS (Sevilla)	1
Franck RIBERY (Fiorentina)	1
Bernardo SILVA (Manchester City)	1
David SILVA (Manchester City)	1
Calvin STENGS (AZ)	1
Dusan TADIC (Ajax)	1
Federico VALVERDE (Real Madrid)	1
Hans VANAKEN (Club Brugge)	1
Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Axel WITSEL (Borussia Dortmund)	1

FORWARDS

Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich)	23
Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	9
Cristiano RONALDO (Juventus)	7
Mauro ICARDI (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Donyell MALEN (PSV)	4
NEYMAR (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Erling HALAND (Red Bull Salzburg)	3
Islam SLIMANI (Monaco)	3
Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid)	2
Sadio MANE (Liverpool)	2
Kylian MBAPPE (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Dries MERTENS (Napoli)	2
ROBERTO FIRMINO (Liverpool)	2
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	1
Ansu FATI (Barcelona)	1
Ciro IMMOBILE (Lazio)	1
Lautaro MARTINEZ (Internazionale)	1
Teemu PUKKI (Norwich City)	1
Marcus RASHFORD (Manchester United)	1
Jadon SANCHO (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Raheem STERLING (Manchester City)	1
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	1
Jamie VARDY (Leicester City)	1

HOW IT WORKS Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Refs must have the final say on VAR

Pierluigi Collina said it. Massimo Busacca said it. Roberto Rossetti said it. The buck must stop with the referee on the pitch. He or she is the single individual among the ever-expanding cast of match officials who should award a goal or disallow one, decree a penalty or deny it, flash a red card or a yellow.

But not according to Premier League and Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL).

The botched introduction of video assistance refereeing into the Premier League has been the story of the season. All English football had to do was follow the pattern laid down at the World Cup in Russia and then in the Champions League. But no. The English knew better.

VAR's mangled arrival has reawakened all the memories of the "we know best" arrogance which sparked so much mistrust within the outside world – right back to 1904 when the French and Belgians asked the Football Association to lead the creation of a world governing body. Famously, FA secretary Frederick Wall said it would go on the agenda for the next executive meeting – in six months' time.

Greg Clarke, the current chairman of the FA, has run up an ecologically-defying catalogue of air miles renewing old friendships and developing new ones in the cause of presenting a more sensitive face to the world. Hence he was duly voted onto the UEFA executive committee, and from thence to the FIFA Council.

Yet still that old self-righteousness lurks in the shadows as the VAR fiasco has illustrated.

The law-making International Football Association Board (IFAB) approved worldwide use of VAR in the spring of 2018 after 18 months of trials around the world and in time for FIFA president Gianni Infantino to order its use in Russia. Even he entertained doubts over its rationality, but he was trapped by his election campaign promises and, in the end, the novelty proved worthwhile. Concern that FIFA had been over-hasty proved groundless.

UEFA duly brought VAR on board for the Champions League, with one or two minor refinements of interpretation, and refereeing bosses Collina and Busacca at FIFA, and Rosetti at UEFA, could all be satisfied with an initial job well done.

This had been a challenge not only of technology but of persuasion. Any man or woman who dare enter the refereeing arena needs a powerful ego. That is essential to maintain self-belief, week-in, week-out, in the face of players who push the laws to the limit, the temper tantrums of those obsessed only with their own objectives and a media in permanent pursuit of mischief.

As Busacca says: "It was not easy to explain to the referees that someone else was looking at the incidents and maybe having a better view. It offended their pride. I understand. I would have felt the same.

"Remember when we introduced the spray to press the wall back at free-kicks? Many of our referees did not like that, which is a comparatively small development compared with VAR. For one thing, they objected to carrying the spray can in addition to everything else. Many referees objected that they should be allowed to impose their own personality on the players.

"But then they tried it...and changed their minds."

If so many referees felt undermined by using the spray, imagine how they would feel taking orders from another referee not necessarily there in the stadium but hundreds of miles away, insulated from the dramatic pressure in front of a bank of television screens.

The reason it worked at the World

In charge...VAR is taking decision-making away from referees

> All English football had to do was follow the pattern laid down at the World Cup and Champions League. But no. The English knew better

Cup was down to three basic reasons. Firstly, the World Cup referees had undergone all the basic preparation as a team; secondly, they knew they were the world's best and had a high level of trust in themselves and each other; and thirdly, all were ambitious to progress as far as possible in the finals, and if they could be saved from error then so much the better.

Rossetti, at UEFA, has taken a similar approach and he has been fortunate in that Europe's major leagues use VAR so the referees are confident and competent in working with the new tool.

A major surprise, after IFAB approved VAR for worldwide use, was that the Premier League did not order up its immediate introduction. Indeed, had it done so then more tolerance might have been shown by managers, fans and media for the initial problems. But no such patience was awaiting when the Premier League eventually joined the VAR club, a year later than necessary.

The initial concern of the Premier League and PGMOL was understandable: fans would object to lengthy interruptions while VAR was activated in mid-match. Hence the crucial – and self-defeating – order for referees to ignore the option of running over to the pitchside monitor.

This had two negative effects. One was perception: if the fans see the referee going over to the monitor then at least they see some dramatic action and know that something is happening – far better than the awful seconds and minutes of

Ignored...a pitchside Premier League monitor

watching the referee with a finger stuck in his ear.

But the second effect has been the worst: the referees on the pitch have had no option but to accept the Order of the VAR even in subjectively contentious areas such as handball. Down on the ground, the referee knows that the VAR has the benefit of a multiplicity of camera angles and a better view of the incident. No longer are they in charge of the match. The greatest responsibility has been removed from them.

This is not what IFAB intended. It is not what Collina, Busacca and Rosetti – all once top-flight referees themselves – want or wanted.

If VAR is to work in the Premier League then power must be restored to the referees. That means use of the pitchside monitor. It also means the Premier League falling in line with the rest of the game. Not for the first time, English football has only itself to blame for being left behind.

Yesterday's men

There was an odd – and welcome – reversal of the status quo in the latest chapter of the FIFAGate saga. Manuel Burga, ex-Peru FA supremo, has been banned for life from football even though he was cleared of corruption by a New York court in December 2017.

Burga and two former CONMEBOL general-secretaries have been kicked out by the FIFA ethics committee and fined 1million Swiss francs over the long-time skimming of millions of dollars from marketing and TV contracts.

Meanwhile, ex-CONCACAF president Jack Warner continues to contest extradition to the US from Trinidad & Tobago, but he must be growing worried. Reports from Port of Spain have hinted that he is considering emerging from well-heeled retirement to re-enter politics – presumably with a view to securing diplomatic immunity.

Back in Europe Michel Platini, now free from his four-year ban, is launching legal action to reclaim "my good name" and the $2m he believes FIFA owes him from almost two decades ago.

And Jerome Valcke, the ex-FIFA secretary-general, is considering an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights over his 10-year ban on charges of illicit ticket-selling and expenses abuse.

WINNERS

LEICESTER CITY

Recorded the biggest away win in the 131-year history of the English top flight, winning 9-0 in the Premier League at Southampton.

FINLAND

A 3-0 victory in Helsinki against Liechtenstein secured second place in Group J of the Euro 2020 qualifiers and guaranteed a place at the finals of a major tournament for the first time.

INDEPENDIENTE DEL VALLE

The Ecuadorian club won their first international club title as they beat Colon of Argentina 3-1 in the Copa Sudamericana Final in Paraguay.

BURIRAM UNITED

Were three minutes from their eighth Thai League 1 title in its 12-season history when they conceded an equaliser away to already-relegated Chiangmai, thus handing a maiden title to Chiangrai United.

IRAN

A goal conceded in added time in the World Cup qualifier away to Iraq meant they haven't beaten their neighbours in the last four games.

CHINA

Defeat to Syria in the World Cup qualifiers led to the departure of Marcello Lippi as national-team coach.

LOSERS

"Apart from Diego Godin, these players haven't won anything and lack experience. We got players from Sassuolo and Cagliari"

Internazionale coach Antonio Conte laments his club's transfer strategy after defeat to Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Full time... Mohamed Magassouba

EUROPE

LUIS ENRIQUE was re-appointed coach of Spain, five months after stepping down from the role after his nine-year-old daughter, Xana, was seriously ill with bone cancer and subsequently died in August.

JOSE MOURINHO signed a deal to manage Tottenham Hotspur until the end of the 2022-23 season, succeeding Mauricio Pochettino.

DICK ADVOCAAT replaced Jaap Stam as Feyenoord coach with the side 12th in the Eredivisie. It is the 72-year-old's 24th managerial post and 17th in club football.

Bottom of La Liga, Leganes hired Mexican **JAVIER AGUIRRE** – whose last job was with Egypt's national side – to replace Mauricio Pellegrino. Segunda Division side Almeria appointed former Real Madrid midfielder **GUTI** as coach.

Veteran...Dick Advocaat

Scorer of the winning penalty for Italy in the 2006 World Cup Final shoot-out, **FABIO GROSSO** replaced Eugenio Corini as coach of Brescia.

ACHIM BEIERLORZER replaced Sandro Schwarz as coach of Mainz nine days after being fired by Cologne, who brought in **MARKUS GISDOL**.

Championship side Stoke City named **MICHAEL O'NEILL** as manager but he will remain in charge of Northern Ireland for the Euro play-offs in March.

Hibernian replaced manager Paul Heckingbottom with ex-Sunderland boss **JACK ROSS** after failing to win a Scottish Premiership game since the opening day of the season.

Brescia boss...Fabio Grosso

Impact... Thierry Henry

CONCACAF

Sacked by Monaco in January, the former France striker **THIERRY HENRY** was named as coach of MLS side Montreal Impact.

AFRICA

Tunisian coach **FAOUZI BENZARTI** took charge of Libya for a second time. He was replaced at Etoile du Sahel by Spaniard **JUAN CARLOS GARRIDO**.

After two years as Mali's caretaker coach, **MOHAMED MAGASSOUBA** was finally handed a permanent contract.

Frenchman **SEBASTIEN MIGNE** was appointed coach of Equatorial Guinea.

Guinean champions Horoya replaced Franco-Portuguese coach Didier Gomes da Rosa with Senegal's **LAMINE NDIAYE**, who led DR Congo's TP Mazembe to the African Champions League title in 2010.

JAMAL SELLAMI replaced Patrice Carteron as coach of Moroccan club Raja.

New role... Arsene Wenger

Wenger takes FIFA role

Former Arsenal manager **ARSENE WENGER** was named FIFA's new chief of global football development.

In a statement, FIFA said Wenger will be responsible for "overseeing and driving the growth and development of the sport for both men and women around the world".

It added that Wenger will also be the "leading authority on technical matters".

Wenger will join FIFA's football and technical advisory panels which are involved in the regular reviews by the International Football Association Board. He will also chair the governing body's Technical Study Group, which has conducted the technical analysis of FIFA tournaments since 1966.

The 70-year-old Frenchman, who left Arsenal in 2018, had been linked with the vacant coach's job at Bayern Munich, but Bayern insisted he had not been considered.

"The truth is that Cristiano Ronaldo hasn't dribbled [past] an opponent for three years"

Fabio Capello on the Juventus star, subbed by coach Maurizio Sarri in successive games

Appointments, sackings and loans

OUT

Resigned... Marcello Lippi

EUROPE

Bayern Munich parted company with last season's double-winning coach **NIKO KOVAC** following a 5-1 defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt which left the side fourth in the Bundesliga.

Udinese dismissed coach **IGOR TUDOR** following a 7-1 defeat at Atalanta and a 4-0 loss at home to Roma in Serie A.

La Liga strugglers Celta Vigo sacked coach **FRAN ESCRIBA** after losing at home to Getafe.

CRAIG LEVEIN was sacked as Hearts manager and will not return to his director-of-football role with the club. He will, however, remain with the Scottish Premiership strugglers until the end of the season in order to "develop and improve the structure of the backroom and youth operations".

Dismissed...Igor Tudor

SOUTH AMERICA

DIEGO MARADONA quit Argentinian side Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata after less than three months as coach.

CONCACAF

RICARDO LA VOLPE left his position as coach of Mexican club Toluca.

MLS side Chicago Fire sacked coach **VELJKO PAUNOVIC**.

AFRICA

South Africa's record scorer **BENNI McCARTHY** was sacked as coach of top-flight strugglers Cape Town City.

Young Africans of Tanzania sacked coach **MWINYI ZAHERA** after defeat in the CAF Confederation Cup play-offs.

ASIA

MARCELLO LIPPI resigned as coach of China, while Indonesia parted company with **SIMON McMENEMY**.

PHIL YOUNGHUSBAND, who holds the goals and games record for the Philippines, with 52 in 108 appearances, announced his retirement at 32.

Genk part company with Mazzu

Last season's Belgian champions Genk sacked their title-winning coach **FELICE MAZZU** after they lost three of the first four games in their Champions League qualifying group and won only six out of 14 domestic league games.

He was replaced by former Hamburg boss **HANNES WOLF**.

Replaced...Felice Mazzu

OBITUARIES

Jorge VERGARA (1955-2019)
The Mexican billionaire businessman built Guadalajara, also known as Chivas, into one of Mexico's leading teams. He took control of the club in 2002 and under his ownership they won the 2006 Liga Apertura, the 2017 Liga MX-Copa MX Clausura double as well as the 2018 CONCACAF Champions League. He also attempted to expand the Chivas brand by founding MLS club Chivas USA in 2004, though the franchise folded in 2014, and owned Costa Rican club Deportivo Saprissa from 2003 until 2011, a period when they won the CONCACAF Champions Cup and competed in the 2005 Club World Championship.

Anatoly KRUTIKOV (1933-2019)
The last surviving member of the Soviet Union side that won the first European Nations Cup in 1960, he played most of his career for Spartak Moscow, winning the Soviet League and Cup, and was coach when they were relegated in 1976.

Paul GARDNER

GLOBAL VIEW

US must address its Latino problem

Gone...former under-20 coach Tab Ramos

The United States Soccer Federation (USSF) has – and has had for decades – a serious problem in its utter refusal to embrace the country's Latino-American soccer community.

Worse still, USSF is apparently unaware of the problem.

That innocent ignorance, which has lasted so long that it now looks more like a systematic policy, can not last much longer. After all, how can the spurning of a huge swath of soccer devotees be in any way helpful to the game in the US?

USSF's dismissive attitude to Hispanics cannot be justified by any argument. For a start, it is an insult, to Hispanic pride. And from a soccer standpoint it means generation after generation of promising young Latino players have been marginalised. This has ensured that the Latino style of play has been virtually banished from USSF's teaching and practice.

At the moment, USSF has not a single Latino coach among its seven various age-group men's and boys' teams, from under-14 to under-20 – and this despite the fact that some 40 per cent of the players involved are Latino. In fact, only one of those teams has a full-time coach – and his story is extremely revealing.

In March 2019 a new coach was required for the national under-17 side that had qualified for their age-group World Cup in Brazil. The position was given, incredibly, to Raphael Wicky, a former Switzerland international but someone with virtually no experience of American soccer. Were there really no Latino-American candidates?

Then, in September, came further evidence that Latino soccer is not on USSF's radar. A youth-soccer task force was being set up and some 60 experts involved in youth soccer were recruited. Some digging by *Soccer America*'s Mike Woitalla revealed that not one of them – not a single one – was a Latin-American male.

Given the massive involvement of Latino boys in the youth game this looked suspiciously like discrimination. But no, it was merely "an oversight" according to a barely apologetic USSF functionary, who gave assurances that the oversight would be corrected.

At the under-17 finals, Wicky's team got wiped out 4-1 by Senegal in their opening group game. They then played defensively in their next game to grab a goalless draw with Japan, meaning that victory against Holland would almost certainly guarantee a place in the second round. As the Dutch had lost their first two games, such a goal seemed achievable, but the US lost 4-0 with a lamentable performance and were out of the tournament.

Under-17 boss... Raphael Wicky

Meanwhile, Mexico were advancing all the way to the Final, beating Holland on the way. Their achievement – they narrowly lost 2-1 in the Final to hosts Brazil – carried a lesson for the USA because two of the Mexicans could have chosen to play for the US. However, it was Mexico who had courted them and encouraged them while USSF showed only a half-hearted interest.

Was anyone at USSF following Mexico's run to the Final?

Soon after the World Cup, USSF lost Tab Ramos, its one and only Latino coach, who left to take charge of MLS team Houston Dynamo.

Ramos, who was a legend in his playing days for the USA national side, had been with USSF for seven years. He had coached the under-20s and been assistant to head coach Jurgen Klinsmann at the 2014 World Cup. But he had also suffered a brutal rebuff, in 2015, when he was passed over for the position of Olympic coach. The position went instead to Klinsmann's colleague, Andreas Herzog, who failed to even qualify the team for the Games in 2016.

Ramos' departure from the national set-up mirrored that of another US Latino playing legend Hugo Perez, who

Wipe out...USA (in white) were no match for Senegal

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

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was coach of the US under-15 team but was canned in 2014. Rumour had it that Perez didn't get on too well with USSF people and that his attention to administrative matters was not up to scratch. Interestingly, just before the recent Under-17 World Cup got underway, Perez announced that he was going to work for the Mexican federation – as a USA-based scout for young Mexican-American boys.

The loss of young American talent to Mexico is now common knowledge.

Alianza de Futbol, which is a privately run programme, was set up in 2006 to discover and showcase young Latino players. Basically, it does what USSF fails to do.

It encourages coaches to come to its various regional tournaments, with the big event of the year being Sueno Alianza. And while there are always plenty of coaches from Mexico present, no coaches from USSF are in attendance. According to one former US coach, they are discouraged from going because Alianza is a "non-affiliated" organisation.

> Some 60 experts involved in youth soccer were recruited...not one of them was a Latin-American male

This has been the year in which USSF's snubbing of America's huge – and growing – Latino soccer community has been well and truly exposed. It has been a year in which the damaging results of that attitude are beginning to appear on the field.

By its intransigence USSF is depriving the sport of a wealth of much-needed talent, severely damaging the very thing it is supposed to be nurturing. It is a situation that cannot continue.

USSF has to change, and quickly. Its current attitude to Latinos is totally unacceptable. As the French put it: it's worse than a crime – it's a blunder. WS

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Tanks a lot... outside Red Star's home

1 SERBIAN BIG SHOT

As if a visit to the Rajko Mitic Stadium, home to Red Star in Belgrade and recent venue for Serbia's Euro 2020 qualifiers, wasn't daunting enough, fans are now greeted on arrival by a Soviet-made T-55 main battle tank.

The tank was given to Red Star supporters, who are often known as the "Northern Army", by one of the companies that decommissions military equipment.

However, the decision to place the tank outside the stadium has evoked painful memories on social media in neighbouring Croatia and Bosnia following the not-too-distant Balkans war of the early 1990s.

No game...Forest are at home this weekend

2 KLAGENFURT FOREST

Austrian second-division leaders Austria Klagenfurt were recently unable to play home games at their Worthersee Stadion after 300 trees were planted on the pitch by Swiss art curator Klaus Littmann for an exhibition called "For Forest – The Unending Attraction of Nature".

3 NO ESCAPE FOR SUB FROM ALL-SEEING VAR

During the course of his warm-up routine behind the goal during a 2.Bundesliga fixture against Bochum, Holstein Kiel midfielder Michael Eberwein decided to return the ball to his side's goalkeeper following a wayward attempt at goal.

But as he kicked the ball back to his team-mate, VAR spotted that the 23-year-old had made contact with the ball before it had crossed the line.

This observation prompted the referee, Timo Gerach, to award a penalty to Bochum and show a bemused Eberwein a yellow card.

Even more frustrating for Eberwein was the fact that his extremely brief involvement in the game was his first touch of the ball in a Holstein Kiel shirt since joining the club from Fortuna Cologne in the summer.

Football royalty... Diego Maradona

4 KING DIEGO

Before he departed as coach of Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata, Diego Maradona was treated like a king when he took the team to play at his former club Newell's Old Boys, who he represented briefly in 1993.

Before the game he was presented with a throne, on which he sat throughout the game, which Gimnasia won 4-0.

He also joined in the home fans' chants and danced along as they sung his name before kick-off.

5 ZLATAN STATUE

Swedish superstar Zlatan Ibrahimovic, recently returned to his hometown club Malmo to unveil a 2.7m high bronze statue of himself

Larger than life... Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Defenders deserve recognition – starting with Van Dijk

There wasn't a moment of hesitation in my mind when it came to choosing the player of the year in the annual *World Soccer* awards.

The man who made the difference, the footballer who had by far the most impact in this calendar year, was totally obvious. It was Virgil Van Dijk.

Without him Liverpool would not have captured the Champions League and they would not now be building on that triumph with such dominant form in their quest to win a first English league title for 30 years.

Van Dijk's imposing presence, his commanding authority, his robust tackling and his intelligent positional awareness have been fundamental to a Liverpool side which now wins trophies as well as admiration for its intensely exciting football.

He was the crucial piece of the jigsaw for the Reds' manager, Jurgen Klopp: the mighty shield to complement the razor-sharp arrows of his attack.

The Dutch master was an easy choice for me; though perhaps not for many others. Defenders are so rarely voted the finest player of a year, and this has always seemed absurd.

In nearly four decades of the *World Soccer* honours there have been just two defenders to top the list: Paolo Maldini in 1994 and Fabio Cannavaro in 2006.

It is surely no coincidence that both are Italian and enjoyed careers in a football culture where the worth of defenders has always been understood and celebrated.

One reason why John Charles was lionised so mightily in Turin is because he was equally effective both at centre-forward and centre-back; the perfect footballer for Serie A.

But even being Italian doesn't always help. The finest example of a magnificent defence being at the heart of World Cup glory was in 1982, with the supremely effective rearguard of Gaetano Scirea, Antonio Cabrini, Claudio Gentile and Guiseppe Bergomi.

None were even among the top three players when the Ballon d'Or prize was voted for that year. It is a sporting injustice that is beyond comprehension.

> In nearly four decades of the *World Soccer* honours there have been just two defenders to top the list

Take a look at the all-time statistics for the Ballon d'Or. There have been 189 choices for the top three players since the award was instituted in the mid-1950s but only 13 of these names were defenders. Just 13. How is that feasible?

How can such a fundamental part of any football team, the defence, be worth just 6.88 per cent of the total when excellence is judged? It defies all logic and reason.

Of course, we know that sublime skills on the ball, coruscating forward play and a cascade of spectacular goals are evidence of a great footballer. We live in an era of two superstars for the ages in Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

A fundamental aspect of judgement, though, must also be which players inspire their teams to win matches and thus lift the prestige trophies, major domestic titles and the Champions League.

Let's ask another question. Why did Liverpool just fail to win the English Premier League last season in an epic battle with Manchester City?

The profound answer is that it was because City's defence tightened up in the final 10 matches of the campaign when veteran captain Vincent Kompany was selected for every game and brought rigour and discipline to the defence of Pep Guardiola's team.

It was further evidence, not that any should be required, that defenders are integral to the best football teams. They deserve to be celebrated for their virtues, their strength and their intelligence.

Scirea and Cabrini never made the lists, not even the minor placings. Nor did Wim Suurbier or Marcel Desailly, Morten Olsen or Alan Hansen. In modern times there has been no place for Gerard Pique, Rio Ferdinand, Giorgio Chiellini or Sergio Ramos.

This is a great pity – and the next four decades of honours really should not be so blind to the great art of defending. WS

Majestic...Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil Van Dijk takes the ball away from Newcastle United's Brazilian striker Joelinton

NEXT MONTH...

Awards 2019

THE RESULTS OF OUR 37TH ANNUAL AWARDS – AND THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED SHAPE THE GAME OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS

PLAYER

TEAM

MANAGER

PEOPLE

OBITUARIES

Headliners

Hansi Flick

Former right-hand man of Joachim Low replaces Niko Kovac at Bayern

The only way to describe the latest palace revolution at Bayern is to observe events through the prism of player power. A struggle for influence, pitting the dressing room against coach Niko Kovac, had been going on for months. Too many of the club's stars simply did not buy into his vision for the team. Indeed, many would claim he never had one at all. When push came to shove, the players donned the black cap.

Bayern president Uli Hoeness – in one of his last acts before retiring and calling time on almost half a century of service at the serial champions – admitted as much when he said: "There definitely was a tendency within the team who wanted to get rid of the trainer. Because of this, the board reacted accordingly."

The following day, Hoeness made the same assertion to *Kicker* magazine, explaining: "Why shouldn't I tell the truth? The greatest pressure came from the team. I'm always in favour of communication and talking. The players can give their opinions but, in the end, the club leadership has to decide."

Bayern have previous, with the unceremonious way in which Carlo Ancelotti was forced out in September 2017 when five key players – among them Thomas Muller, Franck Ribery and Arjen Robben – allegedly turned against the Italian.

Kovac is now licking his wounds following his defenestration but he can have few complaints. The harsh truth is that this was a collaboration which was never going to end well.

The domestic league-and-cup double that Kovac oversaw last term only served to paper over the cracks. For all his organisational skills, steely will-to-win and good humour, the job was simply way too big for him. Kovac did not have the same aura and authority as predecessors Pep Guardiola, Jupp Heynckes and Ancelotti. A grand club requires a gold-standard leader on the touchline – and the former Eintracht Frankfurt boss was just not a good fit.

That's not to say he did not try to stamp his mark on the Bavarians. Yet, somehow, it all seemed forced and unnatural. As a communicator and man-manager he lacked deftness, and on more than one occasion he gave the impression of not having his finger on the dressing-room pulse.

His tendency to blame poor performances on the players' attitude rather than his own tactical choices left him increasingly isolated. And so did his labelling of out-of-favour attacking midfielder Thomas Muller as "a stopgap". Kovac turned out to be the exact

Caretaker...Flick's first game in charge, against Olympiakos

Tense...criticism of Thomas Muller (left) did Niko Kovac no favours

opposite of what the Bayern squad were looking for in a coach. They wanted to dominate, flood forward and play to a sophisticated plan. A defensive-minded, counter-attacking specialist, Kovac offered them nothing of the sort.

Bayern's appointment of assistant coach Hans-Dieter "Hansi" Flick as caretaker was the obvious call.

Although only on the Bayern payroll since July, the 54-year-old has certainly been around the top-level coaching block, notably enjoying a long and successful period, from 2006 to 2014, as the right-hand man to national-team chief Joachim Low. Flick also used to play for Bayern, featuring as a hard-running midfielder in the late 1980s, taking part in the conquest of four Bundesliga titles and picking up a runners-up medal in the 1987 European Cup.

> "There definitely was a tendency within the team who wanted to get rid of the trainer"
> **Uli Hoeness on former Bayern boss Niko Kovac**

In Flick's first two games in charge – a 2-0 Champions League victory over Olympiakos and a 4-0 home drubbing of Borussia Dortmund – Bayern certainly looked a revived force, catching the eye with their defensive organisation and much-improved discipline.

During Niko Kovac's last two months in situ, the defence had been falling apart, conceding no fewer than 17 goals in eight competitive games. Compare and contrast that with Flick's rearguard statistics: two clean sheets and not even allowing Olympiakos or Dortmund a single shot on target. That is quite a feat for a makeshift back line that included a left-back David Alaba at centre-half and a teenage Canadian winger Alphonso Davies at left-back.

By no stretch of the imagination has Flick suddenly turned this Bayern side into a *catenaccio* outfit obsessed with defending in numbers and hitting on the break, but first and foremost he aims to avoid unnecessary risks. Bayern under Kovac were especially susceptible to opposition counter-attacks, too easily losing shape and with the midfield department often failing to track runners.

It was highly telling that in the Olympiakos and Dortmund wins, Flick could not find room in his starting line-up for Bayern's two most creative midfielders, Thiago Alcantara and Philippe Coutinho. He preferred the more physical engine-room attributes of Joshua Kimmich and Leon Goretzka, and in the final analysis the blend worked extremely well.

Another interesting innovation from Flick was his decision to rehabilitate Muller, whom Kovac clearly did not rate. The 30-year-old was absolutely outstanding against Dortmund, relentlessly active in the attacking third, full of bright ideas, responsible for setting up two of his side's goals and even finding time to call the pressing instructions.

"I see myself in a position of responsibility," said Muller afterwards. "To do a lot of organising, make many runs and give the team structure."

Some rightly pointed out that Dortmund offered practically no resistance in Munich, which was a peculiar state of affairs for such an ambitious club and one which spent so heavily on new recruits in the summer. But were the *Schwarz-Gelben* just in the wrong place at the wrong time and forced to feel the wrath of a Bayern team with a new coach to impress?

Flick's Bayern were superior to Dortmund in every category: quicker over the ground, stronger in the tackle, more resourceful, agile, single-minded and, perhaps most important of all, far more effective out of possession.

Describing Bayern's high press as intense does not begin to do it justice; this was gang warfare.

So, could Flick become more than a stopgap at Bayern? While that is hard to say at the moment he has at least managed to restore a smile to the squad, the Allianz Arena fans and the boardroom. And that, for now, counts for a lot in the results-driven sphere that is Bayern Land.

Nick Bidwell

Impressive...Robert Lewandowski scores in the 4-0 win over Borussia Dortmund in Munich

Daniel Levy

Spurs chairman who fired Pochettino and hired Mourinho

Timing is everything in football – as Daniel Levy is likely to discover over the coming months. The Tottenham Hotspur chairman made the biggest call yet of his 18-year tenure by abruptly sacking Mauricio Pochettino, the club's hugely popular manager, and replacing him with Jose Mourinho.

Though Pochettino's position had been a matter of speculation for some months following Spurs' poor start to the season, his departure was still a major surprise. The Argentinian had been the club's most successful boss of the modern era, a man who had worked miracles on tight budgets for a club previously ridiculed for their ability to turn promising situations into failures.

In his place, Levy has brought in a man whose reputation was severely diminished by his most recent employment at Manchester United. And Mourinho's ideas would appear to be at loggerheads with what Levy has been trying to achieve at Spurs. The two-time Chelsea manager has long been criticised for his negative tactics, costly short-termism in transfer dealings and an aversion to deploying youth-team players.

> "Domestic results at the end of last season and beginning of this have been extremely disappointing"

The replacement of Pochettino with Mourinho angered Spurs fans who only months earlier had witnessed some of the greatest moments in the club's history: the semi-final comeback against Ajax in Amsterdam and a first Champions League Final. And as they were quick to recall, the Portuguese had previously said he'd never manage Tottenham, declaring: "I would not take the job because I love Chelsea supporters too much."

Mourinho's arrival was announced just hours after Pochettino's departure, with the speed of the appointment suggesting Levy had been talking to Mourinho and his representatives for some considerable time but had somehow managed to keep everything under wraps.

"Mauricio Pochettino and his coaching staff Jesus Perez, Miguel D'Agostino and Antoni Jimenez have been relieved of their duties," said a club statement, in which Levy added: "Regrettably, domestic results at the end of last season and beginning of this season have been extremely disappointing. We have a talented squad. We need to re-energise and look to deliver a positive season for our supporters."

Surprise arrival... new Spurs boss Jose Mourinho

For 57-year-old Levy, whose family started the Mr Byrite clothing chain and who owns 29.4 per cent of ENIC, it was his biggest decision as chairman since he bought the club from Alan Sugar in 2001.

He has run a tight ship financially, overseeing the construction of Spurs' magnificent but expensive new home, and is still searching for a stadium sponsor – which prompted speculation that his choice of Mourinho was motivated by the need for a name more recognisable to global corporations.

Levy must also address a growing contract crisis, with Christian Eriksen, Toby Alderweireld and Jan Vertonghen all able to leave for free in the summer, and Danny Rose threatening to run down the last 18 months of his deal.

Although famed for his tough negotiating skills, Levy has reportedly agreed to pay Mourinho a salary of £15million a year, but it remains to be seen whether the chairman will also deliver on any of his new manager's preferred transfer targets in the January transfer window.

Mourinho – who will not be bringing in his long-time assistants Rui Faria and Silvino Louro – arrives with a reputation for negative football, with the origins of his "park the bus" phrase going back to a 0-0 draw between Spurs and

Chelsea at Stamford Bridge in 2004, when he commented: "Tottenham might as well have put the team bus in front of their goal."

And what next for Pochettino, who only had a net spend of £109m over five-and-a-half years in North London but had also warned about the need to rebuild the side, even before last season's Champions League run?

Armed with a personal £12m pay-off, thanks to Levy, Tottenham longest-serving manager since Keith Burkinshaw will not be short of suitors willing to invest in the 47-year-old, who will doubtlessly be linked with the footballing financial heavyweights of Europe, with Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester United and possibly Barcelona and Real Madrid all interested in his services.

Gavin Hamilton

Robert Moreno

Tearful number two steps aside for Luis Enrique

What should have been a positive story – Luis Enrique's triumph over tragedy – turned into a public relations disaster for the Spanish federation when stand-in Robert Moreno stepped aside to allow Luis Enrique to return as national-team coach ahead of the summer's Euro 2020 finals.

Luis Enrique stood down in June for personal reasons, revealing two months later that his nine-year-old daughter Xana had died following a five-month battle with bone cancer.

Moreno – Luis Enrique's long-time friend and assistant at Roma, Celta Vigo and Barcelona – oversaw qualification initially as interim coach but was then confirmed in a permanent role in September. He was unbeaten in nine games, winning seven games and drawing the other two.

After Spain's final qualifier, a 5-0 win over Romania in Madrid, Moreno was reportedly in tears as he explained his departure to his players. "They've tossed me aside," he was said to have shouted according to *Marca*.

Moreno did not attend a meeting at federation headquarters the following morning, instead sending lawyers to represent him.

At a press conference later that day, federation president Luis Rubiales was at pains to insist that Luis Enrique's return had the blessing of his former assistant, stating: "It was clear that in the moment that Luis Enrique felt strong to return, the door was always open for him. I have always said that and have always been honest, nobody can feel tricked."

Rubiales then went on to say: "The first person who knew that Luis Enrique wanted to return, even before us at the federation, was Robert Moreno.

"We want to thank Robert Moreno for his work. He did very well and we are very happy with what he did. We found out through Moreno that Luis Enrique wanted to come back.

"We have always acted with respect and transparency, and we have kept our word. The federation has acted coherently with everyone. We are loyal to Luis Enrique and the person who occupied his job.

"Luis Enrique stepped down for the worst possible thing that can happen in a family. He has always been the leader of our project and has a contract until the World Cup in Qatar."

When Moreno had been confirmed in a permanent role he indicated that he would be prepared to give way for Luis Enrique to return at a future date, saying: "I consider Luis a friend and friendship comes first. If he wants to return one day, I'll be happy to step aside."

Luis Enrique's return to the dugout means that Spain have now had five coaching changes in the past 18 months: Julen Lopetegui, Fernando Hierro, Luis Enrique, Moreno, and now Luis Enrique once again.

John Holmesdale

Goodbye...Moreno and Sergio Ramos

Carlos Vela

Mexican voted the best player in MLS

Content...the Mexican is happy in MLS

For years Carlos Vela's career threatened to be little more than a footnote in any story regarding European clubs and their treatment of underage players as it was his signing as a 16-year-old by Arsenal in 2005 that initially prompted FIFA to act against the international "trafficking" of players aged under 18.

Arsenal signed the youngster from Mexican side Guadalajara after he had finished top scorer at the 2005 Under-17 World Championship. But permit issues undermined his start in north London and he was loaned out to a succession of Spanish clubs, starting with Celta Vigo and followed by second-tier outfits Osasuna and Salamanca.

The granting of a UK work permit in 2008 offered hope that he could make the breakthrough in English football, but even after a hat-trick on his full debut, against Sheffield United in the League Cup, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger

Award...with his trophies

questioned his ruthlessness in front of goal, explaining: "He is naturally gifted, quick, intelligent and with very good technique, so you now want him to add that combative, determined side that makes the difference.

"He'll quickly be a world-class striker when he adds that to his game. Some day we all get our chance. The target is to take that chance when you get it."

Questions about his commitment have dogged Vela throughout his career. "I enjoy playing but once the match ends the football is finished for me," says the now 30-year-old, whose declaration of a preference for watching basketball in his spare time did not help his cause.

Nor did an on-off relationship with the Mexican national side, which saw him fall out with coach Jose Manuel de la Torre and miss the 2012 Olympics, where *El Tri* won gold. De la Torre's successor Miguel Herrera failed to persuade Vela to go to the 2014 World Cup.

At Real Sociedad, who signed Vela from Arsenal for €3million after a year-long loan, he began to realise his potential, but a 2018 move to start-up club Los Angeles FC did not surprise observers who felt he was taking the easy option by swapping La Liga for MLS.

> "I enjoy playing but once the match ends the football is finished for me"

"I'm going at the right time and with the desire to try a new adventure," he said at the time. "I want to be close to my country. My family can visit more often and I can go home more often."

LA Galaxy's Swedish superstar Zlatan Ibrahimovic tried to belittle Vela's move to the US, saying: "He's playing in MLS and he's in his prime. When I was 29, where was I? Big difference."

Vela, however, enjoyed the last laugh as LAFC beat Galaxy in the play-offs, and

Common sight... celebrating yet another goal

although they lost to eventual champions Seattle Sounders, Vela can take comfort in looking back on a season in which he broke multiple records, set a new single-season scoring mark in MLS, with 34 goals in 31 regular-season games and was voted the league's Most Valuable Player.

Under his captaincy LAFC collected a record 72 points en route to winning the Supporters Shield as the best performing club in the regular campaign.

Vela appears at peace with himself these days, happy with life in Southern California and telling *The New York Times*: "If I go out to eat with my wife, or take my son to the park, nobody cares."

But football still remains little more than a job and he adds: "I like to play football. I love to go on the field and I want to score 100 goals every game, if I can. But it's also my job. And when I finish my job I have a life, I have a family.

"When I'm working, I want to be the best. But when I'm out, I don't want to watch games. I don't want to talk with everybody about football. I want to talk about life, about anything else."

John Holmesdale

SPECIAL FEATURE

All eyes on Bucharest

An unusual draw will take place in the Romanian capital on November 30

The draw for the finals of Euro 2020 will be like no other. With next summer's tournament being held in 12 venues spread across the continent, seven of the 20 qualified countries already know in which first-round group they will be drawn.

The seven "host" nations will be placed automatically in pre-determined groups to ensure they are at home in at least two group games.

As Rome is one of the two host venues for Group A, Italy will be placed in that group. Similarly, with St Petersburg due to host matches, Russia will be in Group B.

The same goes for Holland (Amsterdam, Group C), England (Wembley, Group D), Spain (Bilbao, Group E) and Germany (Munich, Group F), along with Denmark (Copenhagen) who will be in Group B with Russia.

The make-up of the pots is based upon UEFA's overall European qualifying rankings and each first-round group will contain one team from each pot.

POT 1

Belgium
Italy (hosts, Group A)
England (hosts, Group D)
Germany (hosts, Group F)
Spain (hosts, Group E)
Ukraine

Group D...Wembley Stadium

POT 2

France
Poland
Switzerland
Croatia
Holland (hosts, Group C)
Russia (hosts, Group B)

Group C...Amsterdam's Johan Cruyff Arena

POT 3

Portugal
Turkey
Denmark (hosts, Group B)
Austria
Sweden
Czech Republic

Group B...Parken Stadium in Copenhagen

POT 4

Wales
Finland
Winner play-off Path A
Winner play-off Path B
Winner play-off Path C
Winner play-off Path D

Pot 4 will contain the four play-off winners in March. A further draw may be needed following the play-offs if any of the "host nations" Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Romania or Scotland win their respective play-offs.

Host cities

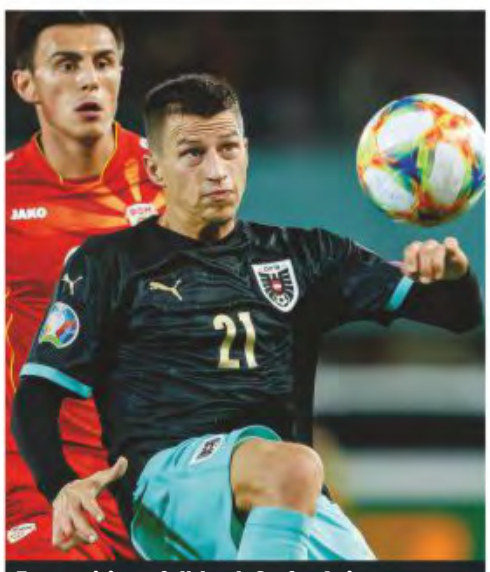
GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP F
Rome	St Petersburg	Amsterdam	London	Bilbao	Munich
Baku	Copehagen	Bucharest	Glasgow	Dublin	Budapest

The Teams

Austria

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Second behind Group G winners Poland. They lost their opening two games of the campaign, to Poland and Israel, but recovered to qualify for only their third Euro finals. Previously they co-hosted Euro 2008, while four years ago in France, they finished bottom of their group, with a solitary point from a goalless draw with Portugal.

● **THE COACH** Former Sturm Graz boss Franco Foda took charge in January 2018, the first German to coach Austria's national side. He replaced Swiss Marcel Koller, who had edged him out of the previous selection process in 2011.


Enterprising...full-back Stefan Lainer

● **KEY PLAYERS** Julian Baumgartlinger of Bayer Leverkusen and Bayern Munich's highly versatile David Alaba are the key midfielders. The enigmatic Marko Arnautovic, now playing in China, remains a key figure and was top scorer with six goals in the qualifiers.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Borussia Monchengladbach right-back Stefan Lainer, who moved from Red Bull Salzburg to the Bundesliga in the off-season, exemplifies the Austrians' new-found competitive intensity and toughness. Dynamic and enterprising going forward, an aggressive presser of the ball and the most resolute of defensive sentries, he was the man of the match in Austria's 2-1 win over Macedonia, crossing for David Alaba to open the scoring, then tapping in his side's second goal.

Belgium

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** With 10 wins from 10, and as the top scorers with 40 goals, they were the most in-form team of the qualifying campaign. New figures – Youri Tielemans, Thorgan Hazard – emerged to energise the squad but concerns remain over an ageing and injury-prone defence.

● **THE COACH** Roberto Martinez took Belgium to the 2018 World Cup semi-finals after taking charge in 2016, earning a contract extension until 2020.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Kevin De Bruyne outshone Eden Hazard in the qualifiers, while striker Romelu Lukaku put a troubled club situation behind him to finish as top scorer.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Although barely 18, Anderlecht attacking midfield prodigy Yari Verschaeren is already being mentioned as a possible heir to Eden Hazard. The teenager is blessed with incredible vision, exquisite two-footed technique, great balance and a rare ability to leave defenders for dead. Made his debut in September as a late substitute in a 4-0 victory in Scotland. A month later, he scored his first international goal, against San Marino.

Shining... Kevin De Bruyne

Croatia

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** An uncertain campaign for the 2018 World Cup runners-up after being hit by injuries and a World Cup hangover. They lost in Hungary, failed to win in Azerbaijan and were held to a draw by Wales in October, but still managed to top the group.

● **THE COACH** Zlatko Dalic earned a new contract, running until next summer, after taking Croatia on their unexpected run to the 2018 World Cup Final.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Marcelo Brozovic has filled in impressively for the injured Ivan Rakitic and Mateo Kovacic, while Luka Modric remains imperious.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Several pundits believed Croatia would struggle following the international retirement of Mario Mandzukic. But after Marko Livaja and Ivan Santini dropped the succession baton, Dinamo Zagreb centre-forward Bruno Petkovic was handed his first cap against Azerbaijan in March and has not looked back since, netting four goals in qualification.

Replacement... Bruno Petkovic

Czech Republic

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** In second place behind England in Group A, they qualified for a seventh successful Euros despite missing out on five of the last six World Cups as an independent nation.

● **THE COACH** Jaroslav Silhavy was on the national-team coaching staff between 2001 and 2009 before returning to the Czech league, where he won the title with Slavia Prague. Has never coached outside of the Czech Republic.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Defensive midfielder Tomas Soucek, winger Lukas Masopust, and key assist provider Jakub Jankto all play for domestic champions Slavia Prague. Injury prone striker Patrik Schick is on loan at RB Leipzig from Serie A.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Late-developing, 30-year-old Dallas striker Zdenek Ondrasek has burst into spectacular life these past few months, racking up goal upon goal for his Texan MLS club and marking his full international debut with a supersub winner against England. Dubbed "the Cobra" because of a snake tattoo on his back, the feisty 30-year-old front runner used to be better known for his vices: smoking, eating unhealthily and playing slot machines.

Homegrown... Jaroslav Silhavy

Improving... Ben Chilwell

Denmark

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Runners-up in Group D and unbeaten in eight games, but four draws – including a 1-1 against Republic of Ireland in their final game – meant they finished behind Switzerland.

● **THE COACH** Norwegian Age Hareide replaced the long-serving Morten Olsen in March 2016 and guided Denmark to the last 16 of the 2018 World Cup. Has won league titles throughout Scandinavia.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Midfielder Christian Eriksen is facing an uncertain future at Tottenham, with his contract due to expire in the summer. Leicester City keeper Kasper Schmeichel excelled in the qualifiers while Atalanta centre-back Simon Kjaer provides leadership.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Statistics are not the best guide to analysing the worth of RB Leipzig front-man Yussuf Poulsen to his national team. While his international strike-rate of just seven goals in 43 appearances is nothing to write home about, he more than compensates with his unselfish running, gritty attitude and an ability to get under the skin of defenders. With great pace and incredible strength, he does a great deal of the Danish dirty work, pulling defenders out of position and opening up breaches for others.

England

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** On a high following their unexpected run to the 2018 World Cup semi-finals, they won Group A at a canter with seven wins and just the one defeat – away to Czech Republic in Prague, where defensive limitations were highlighted.

● **THE MANAGER** Gareth Southgate was under-21 boss when placed in temporary charge of the senior side following Sam Allardyce's resignation in September 2016. The 49-year-old former Middlesbrough manager has earned praise for his man-management skills and deployment of youngsters.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Captain Harry Kane is the elder statesman to an exciting group of young players, including in-form Manchester City attacker Raheem Sterling, flying Borussia Dortmund winger Jadon Sancho and Liverpool full-back Trent Alexander-Arnold.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Improving with every game for the Three Lions, Leicester City left-back Ben Chilwell underlined his credentials with a hat-trick of assists in the 7-0 hammering of Montenegro. Tactically disciplined, strong in his one-on-one defending and improving all the time on offensive sorties, he is a target for all the Premier League big-hitters.

Goals...Teemu Pukki

Finland

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** A sensational first qualification for a major finals was secured with a victory over Liechtenstein in their penultimate game and achieved with a group of players based mainly with clubs in Scandinavia and the middle-ranking leagues.

● **THE COACH** Markku Kanerva was capped by Finland 59 times as a player and spent 12 years in charge of the under-21 team. Was also an assistant to the senior side before succeeding Hans Backe in the top job in December 2016.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Norwich City striker Teemu Pukki has been one of the revelations of the Premier League season, and was his country's top scorer, with 10 goals in qualifying. Augsburg winger Fredrik Jensen and veteran midfielder Tim Sparv also impressed.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Finland's success was not solely built on the finishing of Pukki, they also owe a huge debt of gratitude to Bayer Leverkusen keeper Lukas Hradecky, whose experience kept those around him calm.

France

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Winners of Group H, ahead of Turkey, who were the only team to take points off *Les Bleus*, winning 2-0 in Istanbul and drawing 0-0 in Paris.

● **THE COACH** Didier Deschamps won a World Cup and Euro double as a player in 1998 and 2000. Can he become the first coach to also achieve that?

● **KEY PLAYERS** Deschamps has an embarrassment of riches available to him, including striker Kylian Mbappe, forward Antoine Griezmann and midfielder N'Golo Kante, as well as Raphael Varane, captain and leader at the back.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** A great deal of adverse comment was passed when Olivier Giroud failed to score in France's World Cup triumph last year, not even registering a shot on target in 546 minutes of action. However, remains a trusted partner of Deschamps, who adores his physical presence and dressing room influence. Irony alert: he recently became the third-highest goalscorer in the history of the French national team.

Trusted... Olivier Giroud

Germany

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Winners of Group C, ahead of Holland despite suffering a 4-2 defeat to the Dutch in Hamburg in September. They bounced back with a 2-0 win over Northern Ireland in Belfast and cruised through the final matches, ending with comfortable wins over Belarus and Northern Ireland.

● **THE COACH** Euro 2020 will be Joachim Low's seventh major tournament in charge, having assisted Jurgen Klinsmann at the 2006 World Cup. Faced calls to quit after the humiliating exit from the group stage of the 2018 World Cup but has re-booted the side after ditching of Thomas Muller, Jerome Boateng and Mats Hummels.

Group game...Germany's Jonathan Tah (left) and Ryan Babel of Holland

● **KEY PLAYERS** Former Arsenal starlet Serge Gnabry emerged as key, finishing as top scorer with eight goals, while Toni Kroos, at 29, is the elder statesman of the side. Bayern full-back Joshua Kimmich excels in central midfield.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** While midfielder Kai Havertz has only started a handful of games, the day when he becomes an undisputed first choice must be drawing near. As much as Low has tried to ease the 20-year-old in gently, once-in-a-generation talents have, ultimately, to be used. Excelled in an unfamiliar role as a deep-lying pivot in a 2-2 friendly draw with Argentina in September.

Holland

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Second in Group C behind Germany, they survived a scare in Rotterdam in October, when they went 1-0 down to Northern Ireland with a quarter of hour remaining before recovering to score twice in injury time.

● **THE COACH** Ronald Koeman, a member of a Dutch team that won the 1988 European Championship after failing to qualify for Euro 84 and the 1986 World Cup, was charged with reviving a side that missed out on Euro 2016 and the 2018 World Cup.

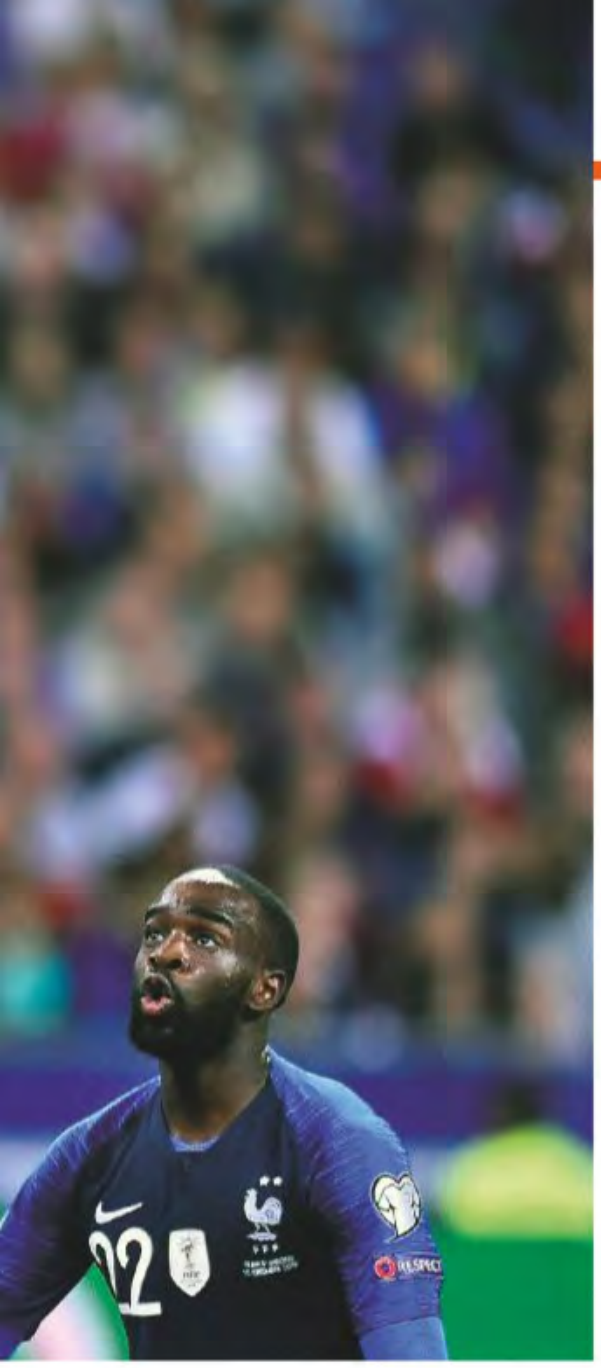
● **KEY PLAYERS** A new generation raised at Ajax – Matthijs De Ligt, Frenkie De Jong and Donny Van de Beek – has complemented the more experienced Memphis Depay, Virgil Van Dijk and Georginio Wijnaldum, who was the top scorer in qualifying with eight goals

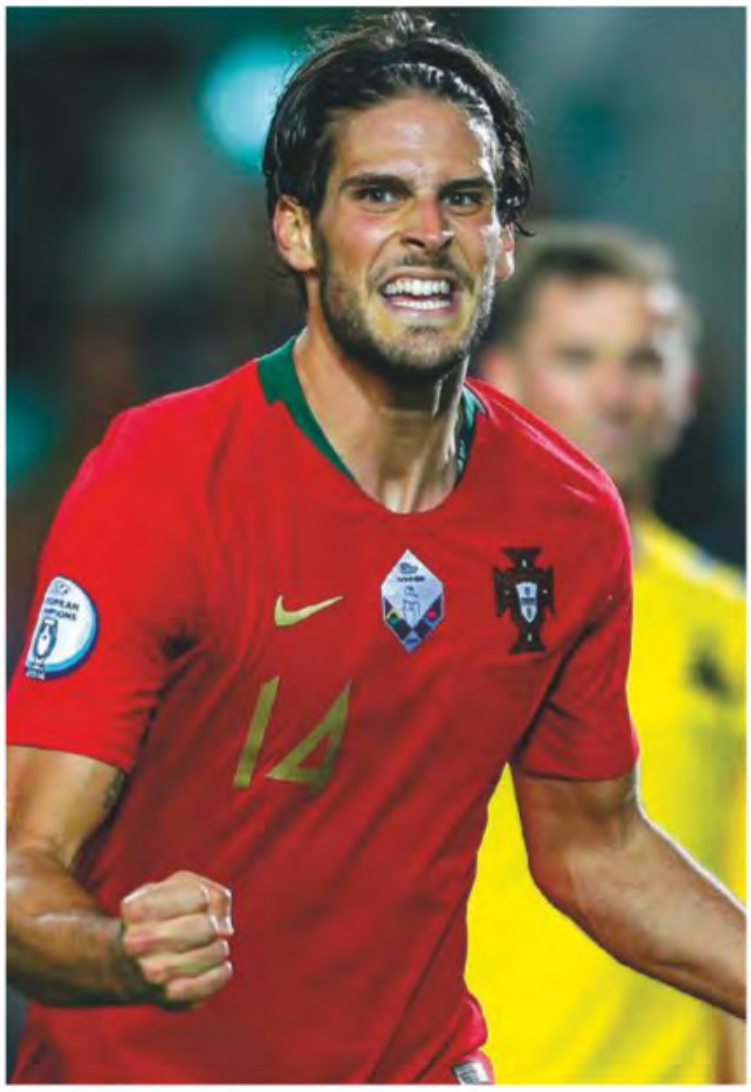
● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Every time left-winger Ryan Babel is picked by *Oranje* boss Ronald Koeman, many in the Dutch media let out a collective moan. For some he is too inconsistent and past his prime, but Koeman begs to differ, happy to stress how important the 32-year-old is to his plans. The *Bondscoach* makes a valid point and, in September, Babel was outstanding in Holland's 4-2 victory in Germany.

Italy

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Qualification was never in doubt as the *Azzurri* won all 10 games and set a new record when surpassing the nine-match consecutive winning run recorded by Vittorio Pozzo's World Cup-winning side of 1938-39. The 37 goals were shared among the squad; Andrea Belotti was top scorer with five.

● **THE COACH** Since taking charge in May 2018, when Italy were still licking their wounds after failing to qualify for the World Cup, Roberto Mancini has restored confidence with a high-pressing, attacking game and introduced a number of exciting young players, including Roma teenager Nicolo Zaniolo and Inter midfielder Nicolo Barella,





Firepower...Goncalo Paciencia

Young talent... Sebastian Szymanski

● **KEY PLAYERS** Inter midfielder Stefano Sensi was the revelation of the qualification campaign, while keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, still only 20, has stepped up to replace Gianluigi Buffon.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** No matter that Fiorentina midfielder Gaetano Castrovilli is an absolute Serie A beginner, Mancini thinks the 22-year-old is good enough and is definitely not alone in that view. The kid from the southern Puglia region is nothing less than a creative natural: fast, elusive, a wonderful dribbler and very imaginative in his passing. His great passion as a youngster was classical dance – and it shows.

Poland

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Comfortable winners of Group G, ahead of Austria, despite a stumble in September, when they lost 2-0 in Slovenia and drew 0-0 at home to Austria.

● **THE COACH** Jerzy Brzeczek took over from Adam Nawalka in July 2018 following Poland's group-stage exit from the World Cup.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Striker Robert Lewandowski, the country's most-capped player and all-time leading scorer, has been in the form of his career for Bayern Munich and was Poland's top scorer in qualifying, with six goals.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Nine months after curling home a free-kick in an under-21 friendly against England, Sebastian Szymanski is poised to be one of the breakout stars of Euro 2020. Even such a world-beating striker as Poland's Robert Lewandowski is reliant on good service and should benefit enormously from his skill and vision.

Portugal

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Runners-up in Group B behind Ukraine, it was a largely unimpressive campaign that was saved by the 11 goals of top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo.

● **THE COACH** Fernando Santos steered Portugal to their 2016 European Championship triumph but has watched many of that side – Eder, Renato Sanches, Joao Mario – struggle to maintain form at club level.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Cristiano Ronaldo, Portugal's most capped player and all-time top scorer, now has 99 goals for his country. Teenager Joao Felix is the exciting new wildcard, but Portugal have plenty of other talent in the likes of Manchester City's Bernardo Silva and Sporting midfielder Bruno Fernandez

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Goncalo Paciencia was duly rewarded with his first cap in the recent 6-0 destruction of Lithuania, marking the occasion with a goal and an assist. Has the touch, intelligence and firepower to take some of the weight off the shoulders of Ronaldo. The son of former Portugal striker Domingos.

Russia

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Second in Group I behind Belgium, who beat them home and away. In their other eight matches, Stanislav Cherchesov's side conceded just once.

● **THE COACH** Stanislav Cherchesov was not expected to continue after the 2018 World Cup but a strong performance as host saw a contract extension.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Zenit striker Artem Dzyuba led from the front in the qualifiers, scoring nine goals to finish as top scorer. Dmitri Barinov has been an impressive new addition.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Zelimkhan Bakaev, a new face in the Russian camp this autumn, is clever, instinctive, mercurial and always looking to make things happen.

Instinctive...Zelimkhan Bakaev

Delight...Sweden

Spain

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Comfortable winners of Group F, they finished undefeated ahead of runners-up Sweden, but it was a campaign overshadowed by the temporary departure of coach Luis Enrique, who stepped down to spend time with his terminally-ill daughter.

● **THE COACH** Former international Luis Enrique was replaced by his assistant Robert Moreno in June but it was announced in November that he would return to lead the team at Euro 2020, where Spain will play their home games in Bilbao.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Captain, penalty-taker and all-time most capped player (170 and counting), Sergio Ramos remains the heart and soul of the team at 33. Striker Alvaro Morata weighed in with crucial goals in qualifying, along with Valencia's Rodrigo.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** One of the revelations of Spain's qualifying campaign, Napoli star Fabian Ruiz is the prototype of the modern-day midfielder: technically well-endowed, adaptable, resilient, hard working and with an eye for goal. The 23-year-old boasts only a handful of caps for *La Roja* but already seems to be the fulcrum of their engine room. The keys of the vehicle belong to him. Determined to quit Napoli at the end of the season.

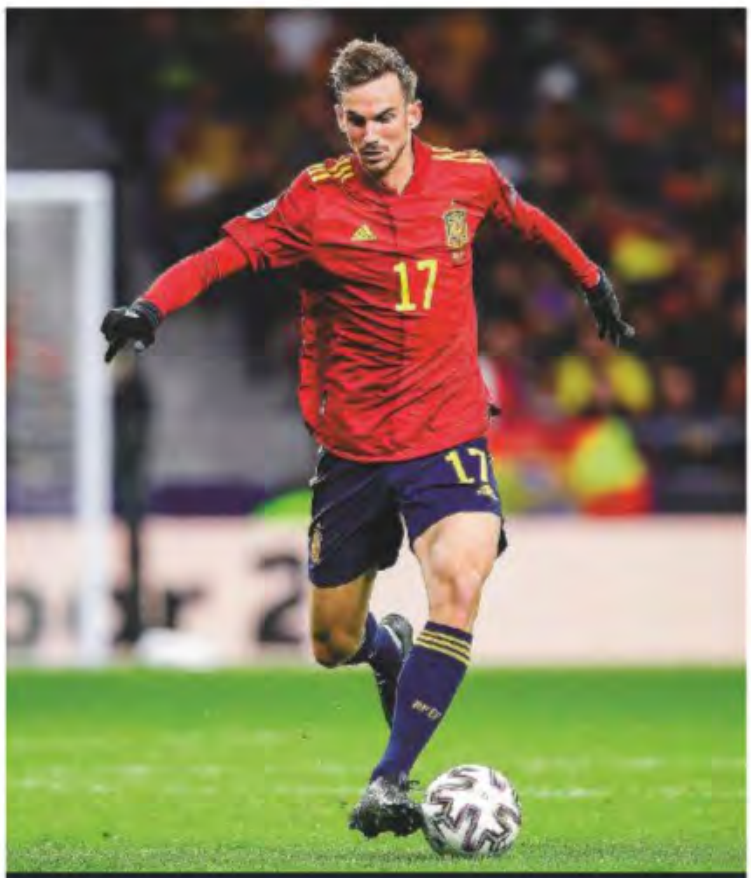
Sweden

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Behind Spain in Group F, they picked up a vital win in Romania in their penultimate match but life would have been a lot easier if they had not conceded an injury-time equaliser to Rodrigo at home to Spain in October.

● **THE COACH** Janne Andersson continues to do impressive work with Sweden. The 56-year-old former Norrkoping coach succeeded Erik Hamren after Euro 2016 and steered the Swedes to their first World Cup in 12 years, as well as having success in their opening Nations League group ahead of Russia and Turkey.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Keeper Robin Olsen helps the Swedes keep a tight ship, while Real Socieded's Alexander Isak has offered glimpses of attacking creativity in the post-Zlatan era, and RB Leipzig midfielder Emil Forsberg remains a crucial influence.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Currently involved in a Bundesliga relegation scrap with Mainz, versatile attacker Robin Quaison has been enjoying far better fortune for his national team, scoring no fewer than five goals on the road to Euro 2020 and making three more for team-mates. Sweden boss Janne Andersson especially values the all-singing, all-dancing qualities of the former AIK and Palermo favourite and his ability to shine in the hole, in a front-line duo or wide on the left.



Fulcrum...Fabian Ruiz has made an immediate impression

Switzerland

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Winners of Group D ahead of Denmark. Despite throwing away a 3-0 lead to draw 3-3 with Denmark in March and then losing to the Danes in Copenhagen in October, they recovered to record wins over Republic of Ireland, Georgia and Gibraltar to secure qualification.

● **THE COACH** Since his appointment in 2014, former Lazio boss Vladimir Petkovic has steered the Swiss to the last 16 of both Euro 2016 and the 2018 World Cup.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Despite his problems at Arsenal, Granit Xhaka retains a crucial role in midfield, while Wolfsburg full-back Kevin Mbabu was one of the revelations of the qualifying campaign. St Gallen's Cedric Itten made a dramatic impact with goals in the final two matches.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Without Borussia Monchengladbach defensive midfield powerhouse Denis Zakaria, Switzerland are, to put it frankly, only half the side. The Geneva-born 23-year-old performs the duties of two or three men. He crunches into challenges, tidies up in front of the back-four, distributes the ball with care and is relentlessly active, often covering as much as 11km per game. He is dynamic, sets the tempo and issues the orders. Indispensable.

Turkey

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Runners-up in Group H behind world champions France after an impressive campaign during which they lost only one game, to Iceland in Reykjavik.

● **THE COACH** Senol Gunes, who led Turkey to third place at the 2002 World Cup, returned early in 2019 following the sacking of Romanian Mircea Lucescu. The 67-year-old had continued to enjoy success in Turkey, winning the league title with Besiktas in 2016 and 2017.

Goals...Kaan Ayhan

● **KEY PLAYERS** Outstanding Roma winger Cengiz Under is the poster boy for an exciting new generation, along with Juventus defender Merih Demiral. Everton striker Cenk Tosun was the top scorer in qualifying with five goals.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Fortuna Dusseldorf centre-back Kaan Ayhan was at the heart of their outstanding performances in Group H. Indeed, he was his country's second-top scorer with three goals, all of them headers. Notably made a nuisance of himself in dead-ball situations against France, on the scoresheet both home and away.

Ukraine

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** Winners of Group B, ahead of 2016 European champions Portugal. Success was based on a tight defence which conceded only four goals in an unbeaten eight-match campaign. A number of youngsters stepped up to fill the gaps left by the retirements of Anatoliy Tymoshchuk, Vyacheslav Shevchuk and Oleh Husyev.

● **THE COACH** Andriy Shevchenko was assistant to Mykhaylo Fomenko at Euro 2016 and succeeded him as head coach in July 2016.

● **KEY PLAYERS** West Ham attacker Andrii Yarmolenko remains Ukraine's leading figure, despite recent problems with injuries. Shakhtar Donetsk centre-back Mykola Matviienko has provided much of the defensive solidity, while Man City's Oleksandr Zinchenko is used as a midfielder for his country.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Shevchenko faces the mother of all selection dilemmas. Does he plump for the experience of Yarmolenko on the right wing or place his faith in the considerable youthful promise of Dynamo Kiev's Viktor Tsyhankov, who scored twice in the 5-0 thrashing of Serbia in Lviv in June?

Decisions...Andriy Shevchenko

Improved... Daniel James

Wales

● **HOW THEY QUALIFIED** As runners-up behind Croatia in Group E after a late unbeaten run which saw 1-1 draws with both Slovakia and Croatia in October and 2-0 wins over both Azerbaijan and Hungary.

● **THE COACH** Ryan Giggs has continued the work of Chris Coleman, guiding Wales to only their third major finals, after the 1958 World Cup and Euro 2016.

● **KEY PLAYERS** Gareth Bale is undeniably Wales' talisman, especially when teamed up with Juventus midfielder Aaron Ramsey, whose absence through injury was missed early in the campaign.

● **PLAYER TO WATCH** Manchester United winger Daniel James can cause all manner of problems with his searing pace, directness and total fearlessness, and his crossing is much improved.

eye witness

Samindra Kunti reports from Ramallah

PALESTINE

West Bank hosts historic meeting with Saudi Arabia

In an historic first, Saudi Arabia travelled to the West Bank to play Palestine in a qualifier for the 2022 World Cup. The match resonated heavily in the political arena as Saudi Arabia, as part of the Arab boycott, had previously refused to enter Palestinian occupied territory.

Four years ago, Palestine and Saudi Arabia were paired in the 2018 World Cup qualifiers but the Saudis pressed Palestine's president Mahmoud Abbas for an exemption from playing in the West Bank. Although it was mutually agreed to shift the match to neutral ground in Jordan, the Saudis, in reality, had backed out of the West Bank game in protest at Israel's control over Palestinian borders.

Today, a different political backdrop allowed Saudi Arabia to travel to the West Bank without upsetting either Palestine ▸

> "We focus on our country to play on our home turf, and sports is one of the symbols of our identity"
>
> **Palestinian Football Association president Jibril Rajoub**

Worship...Saudi players and staff pray at the Dome of the Rock in the Old City of Jerusalem before their game against Palestine

or Israel. The Arab kingdom and Israel enjoy cordial relations, increasingly aligning over mutual foe Iran, hence there was less incentive to move the game away from the Faisal Al Husseini International Stadium, built next to the Green Line and the separation wall on the edge of East Jerusalem in Al Ram.

The stadium's location is of great symbolic significance as it allows the Palestinian Football Association (PFA) to say its national team hosts matches in Jerusalem. In 1998, FIFA recognised Palestine's national team, but most Arab teams have since refused to play in the West Bank because access requires Israeli permits. As a consequence, Palestine has staged most of its home games in Jordan and Egypt. In 2015 United Arab Emirates became the first Arab nation to play in Al Ram.

In October, Raja became the first Moroccan club to play in Palestine, but two of their players and numerous fans were turned away at the Israeli-controlled border ahead of their Arab Champions Cup game against Al Quds Hilal. That same month, Uzbekistan flew into Tel Aviv and boarded a bus to Ramallah for a World Cup qualifier against Palestine. The match passed off without any incidents or complaints and the Palestinians recorded an important 2-0 win over their Uzbek visitors courtesy of goals from Oday Dabbagh and Islam Batran.

Saudi Arabia's national side followed the standard procedure by travelling to Jordan before crossing into the West Bank via the King Hussein Bridge, a land border controlled by Israel. In a co-ordinated security operation, the Saudis were not required to descend from their team bus at customs. Israel no longer stamps passports, but instead issues a paper visa.

High flier...Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Madu (in white) beats Abdelatif Bahdari of Palestine in the air

In Ramallah, Saudi Arabia were welcomed by the Palestinian president, who emphasised that the game illustrated deep bonds between the two countries, a message the Palestinian National Authority and the PFA delivered in unison in a bid to spin the match as political gain for Palestine. The Saudi Arabian Football Federation president Yasser Almisehal led a Saudi delegation to the Al Aqsa Mosque, one of three foremost worship sites in Islam, but the formal visit was thrown in disarray by protesters, who objected to Saudi Arabia's presence as legitimisation of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.

Tensions in Palestine have been exacerbated recently by US president Donald Trump and his "Deal of the Century" – of which details remain shrouded in mystery. The US administration's foreign policy to date suggests that Trump will prioritise Israeli interests over Palestinian rights, ignore fundamental principles of international law and steer well away from the concept of two sovereign states.

By match day the actual game had become something of a sideshow. To prevent any anti-Saudi protests inside the stadium, the PFA manufactured a sell-out crowd of loyal fans by distributing tickets through sponsor and local telecoms operator Jawwal. Students from the Arab American University and the military defence college Al Istiqlal were also bused in. In a tightly stage-managed scenario, a Palestinian fan was arrested for waving a Yemeni flag before kick-off. Palestinian police forces subjected the stadium to a massive security operation – which was all the more striking because Palestine can not normally deploy security personnel in this Israeli-controlled zone of the West Bank.

PFA president Jibril Rajoub, who is also a high-ranking figure in the Palestinian National Authority, downplayed the idea that Saudi Arabia's visit implied a normalisation of the Palestinian situation, emphasising that sport and politics should be separated. He denied that the game had been manufactured at the highest political level, arguing Saudi Arabia had simply accepted an invitation to play the game on Palestinian soil. However, before his news conference he explicitly thanked Saudi crown prince Mohammad Bin Salman Al Saud, the Saudi government and the Saudi Sports Authority.

"They didn't receive a political invitation," said Rajoub. "We focus on our country to play on our home turf, and sports is one of the symbols of our

Challenge...Palestine's Mohammed Yameen is brought down

Backing...fans at Palestine-Saudi Arabia game

> "We received a fantastic welcome, even during our travel by road the people were clapping. They were happy to see the Saudi team in Palestine"
>
> **Saudi Arabia coach Herve Renard**

identity. This decision supports Palestine and it helps in our stride against occupation or anyone who stands by Israel by silence or politics.

"We see it as a step of strategy. Talking about normalisation on that issue is not fair. It is a message from the Saudi to our people: we are with you, and you are not alone. Visiting and playing in Palestine is recognising the Palestinian political entity."

Newly appointed Saudi Arabia coach Herve Renard added: "I am only a football coach and we follow the instructions. If you want my opinion, it is better to be there. This is football. If we can have one world with peace everywhere, it would be perfect.

"Of course, it is not the case. We are not politicians, we are football players and coaches, we just have to enjoy this game. We received a fantastic welcome, even during our travel by road the people were clapping. They were happy to see the Saudi team in Palestine, so that is the most important."

The Frenchman, who was previously in charge of Morocco, will not have been pleased with a 0-0 draw against Noureddine Ould Ali's team. In theory, Saudi Arabia, who are ranked 69th in the world, should be no match for Palestine. Last January, Palestine participated in only their second Asian Cup, garnering two points from draws with both Syria and Jordan, a result that left coach Ould Ali exposed to criticism for his conservative approach.

Saudi Arabia have won the continental tournament three times. They boast the region's best league, huge budgets and modern infrastructure, but ever since qualification for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, and the dismissal of Dutch coach Bert Van Marwijk, the constant chopping and changing has destabilised the side. Renard retained just eight players from Saudi Arabia's 2018 World Cup squad, but his transitional team struggled against Palestine. The Saudis had already faced scrutiny after contriving to draw 2-2 with Yemen in their first qualifier while enjoying 80 per cent of ball possession.

Palestine were left to rue their chances with centre-forward Saleh Chihadeh squandering several opportunities and Group D – which also includes Singapore and Uzbekistan – remains wide open.

In the political arena the draw had three winners: Saudi Arabia and Israel, who maintain a cordial status quo, and Palestine, who can now claim to have a powerful new ally. WS

Saudi boss...Herve Renard (left) and his assistant Patrice Beaumelle

Welcome...Saudi Arabia arrive in Ramallah

eyewitness

Nick Bidwell reports

SWEDEN

Ostersund dream is fading fast

Club that rose rapidly through divisions is hit by series of blows

Ostersund, the Swedish Cinderella side which sensationally went from fourth tier no-hopers to the upper reaches of the Allsvenskan, are enduring their own private nightmare at the moment, forced to pick up the pieces of an economic, sporting and institutional cataclysm.

Not so long ago this was a club that lived and breathed overachievement, winning the Swedish Cup in 2017, establishing themselves as one of the most competitive teams in the country and reaching the knockout phase of the 2017-18 Europa League.

During those heady European nights, Ostersund, a team fashioned from Moneyball scraps, managed to claim the scalps of Galatasaray, PAOK, Hertha Berlin and Arsenal, memorably winning 2-1 in North London in a round-of-32 tie. Yet how quickly the dream has faded, with legal issues bubbling up and financial ruin on the cards.

Over the last year or so, nothing has gone right in this corner of central Sweden. All the club's best players have been sold, alchemist coach Graham Potter has returned to his native England to take charge of Swansea City and then Brighton & Hove Albion, and the team only narrowly avoided relegation from the top flight this season. And, in the worst blow of all, chairman Daniel Kindberg was recently jailed for three years for "serious financial offences".

Kindberg, once hailed as a small-town football visionary, was found guilty of concocting an unlawful scheme whereby 11.8million kronor (kr) of taxpayer money was funneled into the club. The scam involved two other men and three companies, one of which was the Ostersund municipality's housing corporation – which Kindberg presided over as chief executive.

Disgraced...Daniel Kindberg

Full of innovative ideas and a brilliant publicist, the larger-than-life Kindberg was the club's driving force, the man behind their repeated exploits in the bargain-basement transfer market and off-the-wall methods of player-personality development, encouraging the squad to try such performing arts as stand-up comedy, dancing, painting and rapping.

Now he has been denied freedom and is no longer OFK chairman, leaving a decidedly tainted legacy in his wake.

Not that Kindberg has lost all of his friends and admirers in the region. Many still adore him for his part in turning a predominantly winter-sports town into a footballing paradise. Ask Linda Hedenljung, the *Ostersunds-Posten* reporter who first broke the story.

"Ostersund is split," she told *Associated Press* in April. "One half say keep digging, the other half say stop interfering with our beloved football team."

The phrase "existential crisis" is wholly apt in Ostersund's case. Everywhere they look they see storm clouds. The tax man is hammering at the door, budget forecasts – particularly relating to player sales and matchday revenues – have proved delusional, they have lost kr7m in sponsorship income and face a gargantuan task of meeting operating costs. Just to keep ticking over they need

Troubled...OFK's Jamtkraft Arena

> Over the last year or so, nothing has gone right in this corner of central Sweden

to raise kr15m by the end of the year and at the time of writing they have amassed little more than half of the required sum. An appeal for donations has been made to fans and local businesses, but will it be enough?

OFK are staring down the barrel in other ways, too. The Swedish football authorities may well order the club's demotion from the top flight and OFK are also serving a two-window FIFA transfer ban. They were punished after they and Iranian midfielder Saman Ghoddos reneged on a deal to join Spanish side Huesca last year.

So spare a thought for Ostersund's English coach, Ian Burchnall, who used to be in charge at Viking in Norway. Not only does he have a young, raw squad to nurture, looming over him are a mountain of off-the-pitch distractions. Somehow he remains hopeful about OFK's immediate future. Others are far less certain.

Battle...Ostersund (in red) taking on Hammarby this season

DJURGARDEN DRAMA

Character and strong nerves were the key ingredients as Stockholm club Djurgarden clinched the 2019 Swedish league title, their first Allsvenskan triumph in 14 years.

Visiting fifth-place Norrkoping on the final weekend of the season, Djurgarden needed one point to secure their eighth national crown. But they got off to a terrible start, conceding twice in the opening quarter of an hour and failing to reduce the deficit prior to the break. With fellow title-chasers Malmo and Hammarby both winning – versus Orebro and Hacken respectively – Djurgarden's hopes of top spot seemed to be slipping through their fingers.

Thankfully for fans of the side

nicknamed "The Iron Furnaces", Djurgarden still had plenty of fire in their belly and promptly set the fightback in motion. Five minutes after the restart, defensive midfielder Jesper Karlstrom pulled a goal back with an excellent volley from the edge of the box, and 15 minutes later they were back on terms, Sierra Leone striker Mohamed Buya Turay smartly turning in a cross from Emir Kujovic.

With no further goals, swarms of Djurgarden supporters flooded onto the pitch to celebrate with their ecstatic heroes at the final whistle. The image of the day was undoubtedly the tears of jubilation and raw emotional outpourings of long-serving Djurgarden director of sport Bosse Andersson. To say he was pleased would be the understatement of the year.

Djurgarden, beaten only four times all season, finished the campaign a single point ahead of Malmo and Hammarby, with Malmo taking the runners-up slot thanks to a slightly better goal difference.

Defending champions AIK, who eventually came fourth, were in the title shake-up until the penultimate round, undone by a 2-0 loss at Malmo.

Full marks to joint-Djurgarden coaches Kim Bergstrand and Thomas Lagerlof, who in their first season in charge pulled off something of a minor miracle, transforming a team which came seventh the previous year into a slick, cohesive and highly competitive outfit.

The brains trust behind IK Sirius' promotion to the top flight in 2016, the Bergstrand-Lagerlof combo deserve every plaudit coming their way. They created a harmonious atmosphere in the Djurgarden camp, instilled a winning culture and brought about a vast upgrade in tactical flexibility, with any number of systems (4-3-3, 4-4-1-1, 3-4-3, 4-4-2 or 4-2-3-1) ready to be rolled out.

Within the Djurgarden first XI there was certainly no shortage of influential performers. Captain and centre-back Marcus Danielson, a tower of strength throughout the campaign, was rightly voted the Allsvenskan player of the season. Attacking full-backs Elliot Kack and Aslak Fonn Witry – who is a Norwegian with an extremely bright future – added penetration and aggression to the mix, while left-sided midfielder Jonathan Ring proved an invaluable contributor, supplying both chances and firepower.

Equally to the fore was marksman-in-chief Buya Turay, who was a loanee from Belgian side Sint Truiden. The Swedish league's top scorer this season with 15 goals, the 24-year-old west African was simply too hot for most opposing defences to handle. Wily and sharp in the box, he is a speedy and clever counter-attacker who is able to play in a variety of roles: as the sole leader of the line, as a second striker or out wide.

Finale...Mohamed Buya Turay (left) celebrates his goal against Norrkoping with Djurgarden team-mate Elliot Kack

> Marksman-in-chief Buya Turay was simply too hot for most opposing defences to handle

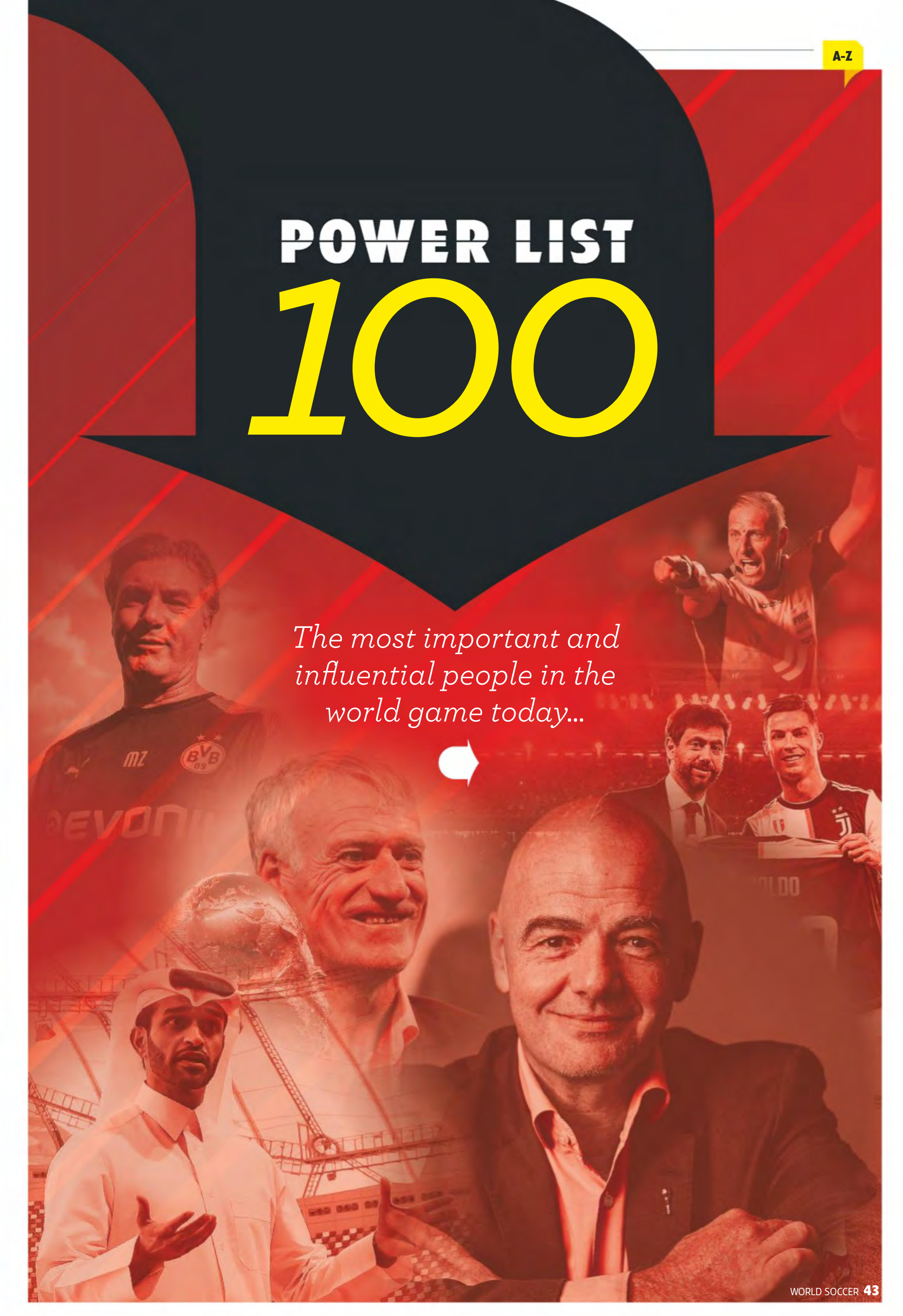
Joy...Djurgarden hoist Bosse Andersson

Two mid-season signings also played a substantial role in this most unlikely of success stories. English midfielder Curtis Edwards, an August signing from Ostersund, swiftly showcased his work ethic and multi-faceted skills, while Swedish international forward Kujovic, who was brought in from Fortuna Dusseldorf, wasted no time making his mark, regularly providing a dash of supersub magic.

Sundsvall and Eskilstuna suffered automatic relegation from the Allsvenskan, while Kalmar, who finished third from bottom in the top flight, saved their bacon by overcoming Brage in an end-of-season relegation/promotion play-off. WS

POWER LIST 100

The most important and influential people in the world game today...



Star man...Andrea Agnelli with Juve's Cristiano Ronaldo

Hany ABO RIDA

Egypt, FIFA Council member

One of the few surviving members of the 2011 FIFA ExCo that voted to award the 2018 and 2022 to Russia and Qatar respectively. A close ally of the now-disgraced Mohamed Bin Hammam, he accompanied him on the infamous visit to Trinidad that saw the Qatari accused of offering bribes to Caribbean officials.

AHMAD Ahmad

Madagascar, CAF president, FIFA Council

Former Malagasy FA president who challenged – and beat – incumbent Issa Hayatou for the CAF presidency in 2017. A backer of FIFA president Gianni Infantino, his tenure has been dogged by allegations of corruption and he is currently being investigated by both FIFA's Ethics Committee and French anti-corruption authorities over a deal with a French kit supplier.

Sheikh AHMAD Al Fahad Al Sabah

Kuwait, administrator

IOC member who resigned from the FIFA Council in 2017 after denying allegations of bribery but remains an influential figure in Middle Eastern football.

Mahfuza AKHTER

Bangladesh, FIFA Council member

Beat the incumbent, Australian lawyer Maya Dodd, in 2017 to claim the FIFA Council seat reserved for Asian women. Criticised for being unable to name the women's world champions.

Nasser AL KHELAIFI

Qatar, PSG president, chairman Qatar Sports Investments, beIN Media CEO

Former Davis Cup tennis player who has emerged as the leading figure in Qatar's bid for global influence. Recently elected to UEFA ExCo as a club representative despite facing bribery allegations over World Cup TV rights.

First...Sonia Bien-Aime

Saud Abdulaziz AL MOHANNADI

Qatar, FIFA Council member

Former general-secretary of the Qatar FA. Elected in April 2019 as one of the AFC's representatives on the FIFA Council.

Tamim bin Hamad AL THANI

Qatar, Emir of Qatar

Succeeded his father as Qatar's monarch in 2018. The 39-year-old IOC member has continued to push Qatar's ambitions in football.

Hassan AL THAWADI

Qatar, head of 2022 World Cup organising committee

A key figure in Qatar's successful bid for the 2022 World Cup and subsequently the public face of the preparations.

Mariano ARANETA

Philippines, FIFA Council member

Former Filipino international and national coach turned FA president who was voted onto the FIFA Council in May 2017.

Jose ASTIGARRAGA

Paraguay, administrator, CONMEBOL general-secretary

Appointed in 2016 as part of the reforms instigated at South American

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Andrea AGNELLI

Italy, Juventus chairman, ECA chairman

Andrea Agnelli is as close as it comes to football royalty. He is the fourth member of his family to preside over Italian record champions Juventus since FIAT owner Edoardo Agnelli bought control in 1923. In between came Gianni Agnelli and then Umberto, Andrea's father.

For Andrea becoming chairman of the European Club Association was a natural further leadership role once Juve's command of Serie A (eight league titles in a row since 2012) and finances (courtesy of the new stadium built in 2011) in the wake of the *Calciopoli* scandal had been established.

Leading the ECA is a job which involves representing more than 220 regular European competition clubs not only in title but as one of its two representatives on the UEFA executive committee. This is a difficult balancing act because of the conflicts of interest, but Agnelli would consider he is appropriately qualified.

Becoming Juventus president in 2010, he joined the ECA board in 2012 and then succeeded Karl-Heinz Rummenigge as chair in 2017. The trouble is that the ECA is split between the minority of Big Five league giants – such as Real Madrid, Barcelona, Manchester City, Paris Saint-Germain and Agnelli's Juventus – and the majority of the continent's middle-of-the-road clubs. Both sectors furnish different aims. The giants want a format which guarantees their permanent presence, the rest are setting a sky-high price for compliance.

Agnelli is stuck between a rock and a hard place. He must be seen clearly to be balancing his organisational responsibility against his own club's interests. He has denied media reports about disagreement, talking only of "concerns which we have put at the centre of discussion".

> He is stuck between a rock and a hard place – between his organisational responsibility and his own club's interests

Further challenges loom over the ECA's guarded response to FIFA's new Club World Cup in which the big clubs are insisting on playing in 2021. And the ECA risks splitting after Real Madrid president Florentino Perez played a leading role in creating a new World Football Club Association.

The outlook for Agnelli is awkward, to say the least.

Keir Radnedge

PSG boss... Nasser Al Khelaifi

confederation CONMEBOL following the FIFAGate corruption scandal.

Sarai BAREMAN

New Zealand, FIFA head of women's football

Former Samoan FA official brought into FIFA by Gianni Infantino in 2016. One of the highest-ranking female officials in Zurich.

Jonathan BARNETT

England, agent

Founder and chairman of London-based Stellar Group, his most high-profile client is Gareth Bale. Named by *Forbes* as the world's most powerful sports agent after negotiating an estimated $1.28billion in contracts and transfer fees.

Josep Maria BARTOMEU

Spain, Barcelona president

Catalan businessman who has been president of Barcelona since 2014 following the resignation of previous president Sandro Rosell. Likely to face a re-election battle in 2021.

Txiki BEGIRISTAIN

Spain, Manchester City director of football

Former Spain international who has played a central role in the emergence of Man City as a major force in English and European football, overseeing youth development and recruitment.

Alasdair BELL

Scotland, FIFA deputy general-secretary

Former head of legal affairs at European governing body UEFA who was hired by FIFA in 2018 and is playing an increasingly important role in Zurich.

Giuliano BERTOLUCCI

Brazil, agent

Responsible, with partner Kia Joorabchian, for many Brazilians moving to Europe. Clients include Willian, Philippe Coutinho and David Luiz.

Sonia BIEN-AIME

Turks & Caicos, FIFA Council member

In 2015 became the first woman to be elected to FIFA's executive committee in a seat not designated for a female.

Philippe BLATTER

Switzerland, president InFront/Wanda

A major figure in global TV rights, the nephew of former FIFA president Sepp Blatter is now playing a key role in football's development in China, where Wanda, who bought his InFront agency in 2015, is a high-profile sponsor.

Tarek BOUCHAMAOUI

Tunisia, FIFA Council member

Elected to FIFA's top body in 2015 as part of a new wave of African executives. Was revealed by the Swiss Leaks investigation to have over €43million in an HSBC bank account.

Key...Hassan Al Thawadi is the public face of Qatar's preparations for their hosting of the 2022 World Cup finals

Lukas BRUD
Germany, secretary/CEO International Board
The public face of IFAB, the game's rule-making body. A key figure in the monitoring and assessing of the impact of rule changes such as VAR.

Almamy Kabele CAMARA
Guinea, FIFA Council member
Member of FIFA Council since September 2016, when he beat future CAF president Ahmad in a continental election to decide African representation on the Council.

Aleksander CEFERIN
Slovenia, UEFA president, FIFA vice-president
Lawyer who worked for his family's firm before becoming Slovenian FA president in 2011. Succeeded Michel Platini at UEFA in 2016 after beating Holland's Michael Van Praag in an election. A technocrat who has been far less media-friendly than Platini.

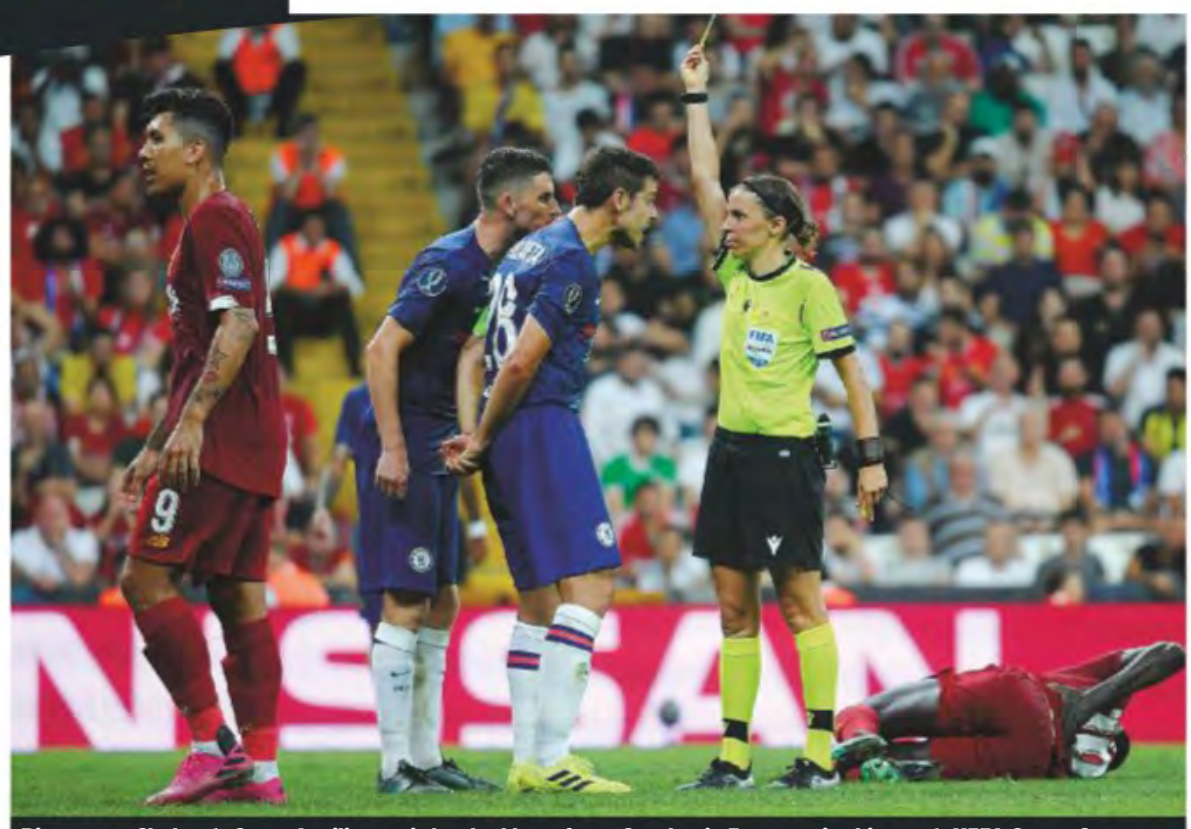
Michele CENTENARO
Italy, ECA general-secretary
Key figure in running the European Club Association, successor of the G-14 group. Previously head of club competitions at UEFA.

Pedro CHALUJA
Panama, FIFA Council member
President of the Panamanian federation since 2010 and part of the post-FIFAgate new wave from CONCACAF.

Evelina CHRISTILLIN
Italy, FIFA Council member
Another of the new intake for the expanded FIFA executive in September 2016, elected as the UEFA female member. A former skier who played a key role in the 2006 Turin Winter Olympics.

Greg CLARKE
England, FA chairman, FIFA vice-president
Businessman who was on the board of Leicester City before becoming chairman of the Football League, moving to the FA in 2016. Beat the Irish FA's David Martin to assume the Home Nations' vice-presidency of FIFA earlier this year.

Winner ...Didier Deschamps


Big game...Chelsea's Cesar Azpilicueta is booked by referee Stephanie Frappart in this year's UEFA Super Cup

Pierluigi COLLINA
Italy, chairman FIFA's referees committee
The world's most recognisable match official now plays an important role in the appointment of FIFA tournament officials and implementation of rule changes.

Joyce COOK
England, general-secretary FIFA Foundation
A key figure in improving diversity within FIFA. Previously the world governing body's Chief Member Associations Officer.

Carlos CORDEIRO
USA, USSF president
Former banker elected in 2018. Embroiled in an equal-pay row with the USA women's national team players.

Onofre COSTA
Portugal, FIFA head of communications
Appointed earlier this year after a long spell as the spokesman for Portugal's national team.

Sandor CSANYI
Hungary, FIFA Council member
Multi-millionaire banker and reported by *Forbes* to be Hungary's richest man. Member of UEFA's ExCo and, since 2017, the FIFA Council.

Ramon CUGAT
Spain, orthopaedic surgeon
Dubbed the "Messi of medicine". Famed for his plasma treatment, whereby patients are re-injected with their own blood.

Didier DESCHAMPS
France, national coach
World Cup-winning boss, 20 years on from his success captaining France to World Cup glory.

Luigi DE SIERVO
Italy, Serie A CEO
Former TV executive (Infront, Sky) who was appointed late last year with a brief to develop and boost Serie A's TV revenues.

DU Zhaocai
China, FIFA Council member
Elected in April this year as one of the Asian representatives on FIFA Council. China's former deputy sports minister, his appointment led to accusations of government interference in the Chinese federation.

Long standing... Don Garber

Stephanie FRAPPART
France, referee
Officiated the 2019 Women's World Cup Final and the first woman to take charge of a men's European showpiece game: the 2019 Super Cup.

Don GARBER
USA, MLS commissioner
Boss of Major League Soccer since 1999, he has overseen the consistent expansion of the league to the current 24 teams, with plans to increase to 30 by 2023.

David GILL
England, UEFA vice-president and treasurer
Former Manchester United chief executive who is now the leading English powerbroker within UEFA and FIFA circles. Quit his FIFA vice-presidency role in 2015 in protest at the re-election of then-president Sepp Blatter.

Alejandro DOMINGUEZ

Paraguay, CONMEBOL president, FIFA Council

Alejandro Guillermo Dominguez Wilson–Smith is bearer of the ultimate poisoned chalice in the football banquet: the presidency of the South American confederation. He must lead CONMEBOL out of the mire of its corrupt past – and in a manner that will quash criticism that, for him, the job is just a rich boy's toy.

Like Infantino at both UEFA and FIFA, Dominguez owes his status not only to his own ambition but largely to events beyond his will and control.

CONMEBOL's leadership is considered off limits to Brazil and Argentina in order to maintain a political balance.

From 1986 to 2015 the presidency was held, successively, by Paraguayan Nicolas Leoz, briefly Uruguayan Eugenio Figueredo then another Paraguayan in Juan Angel Napout. It was under these three that high-level financial fraud for personal gain was institutionalised. That continued until 2015 when the US Justice Department's FIFAGate investigation cut the head of the criminal dragon. Leoz had already been forced out by the FIFA/ISL scandal, and Figueredo and Napout were both indicted. Figueredo was extradited to Uruguay and Napout to the US.

Hence another Paraguayan in Dominguez, to his own surprise, was propelled into the CONMEBOL presidency.

Initially, he was decried by opponents as lightweight. His father, Osvaldo, was a heavyweight politician and millionaire businessman who had enriched himself under the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner. Young Alejandro, 44 on his accession in 2015, never had to worry for the next guarani.

However, he understood the international political game and quickly hitched his horses to the Infantino bandwagon.

CONMEBOL remains a welcoming haven for FIFA tournaments: the Women's World Under-17s in Uruguay in 2018, the recent men's World Under-17s in Brazil. In the meantime, Dominguez has been using his influence and family connections to rebuild trust with the authorities in Paraguay.

A far greater test lies around the corner: the bid from Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile for the centenary World Cup in 2030. That will be a definitive guide to the real place of Dominguez and CONMEBOL in the football power game.

Keir Radnedge

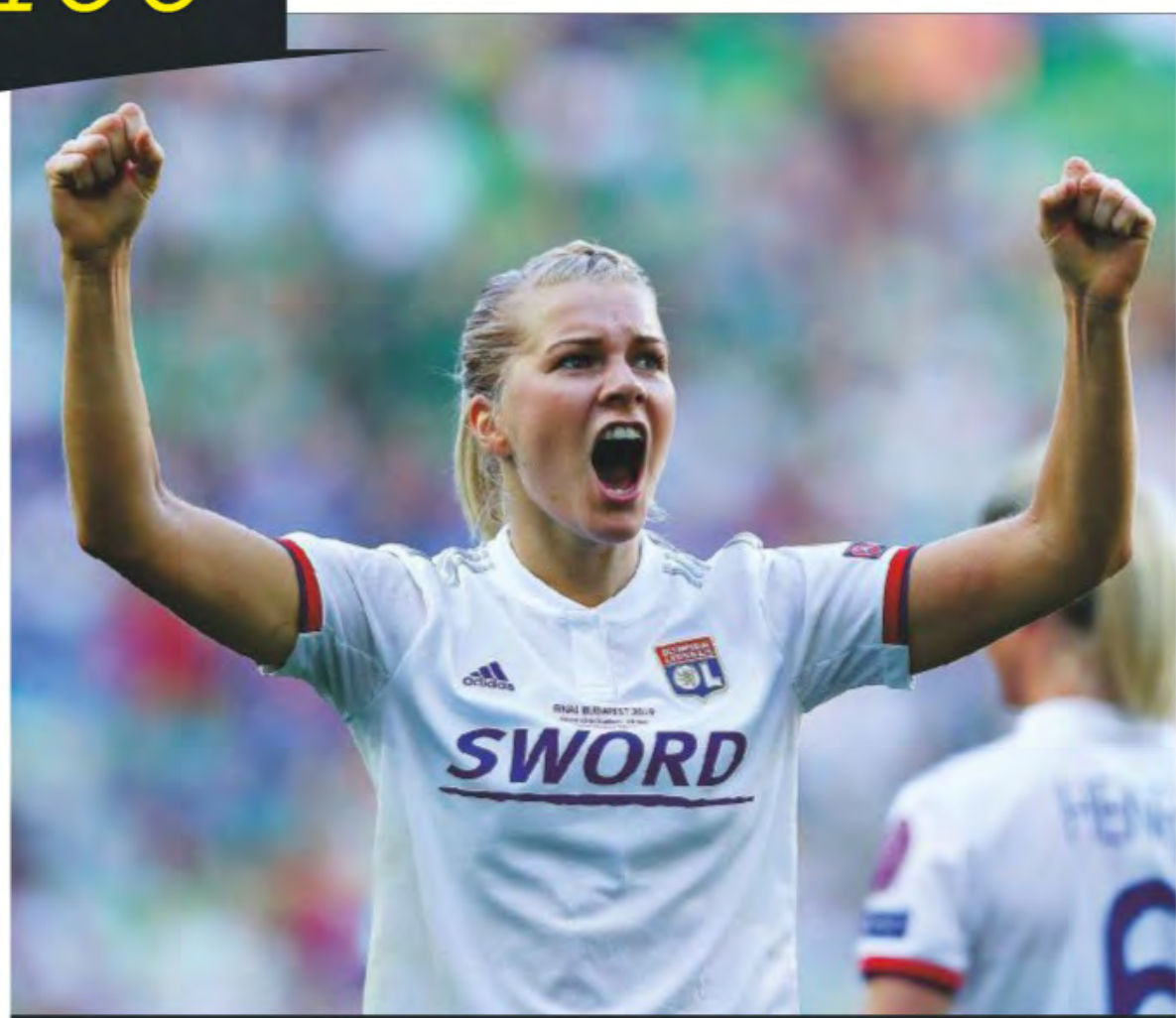
Dominguez understood the international political game and quickly hitched his horses to the Infantino bandwagon

Fernando GOMES
Portugal, FIFA Council member
Former Porto director and Portuguese league boss who was elected his country's FA president in 2011 and joined the FIFA Council in 2017.

Mattias GRAFSTROM
Sweden, FIFA deputy secretary-general
Chief of staff to president Gianni Infantino's private office who effectively acts as his boss' gatekeeper and fixer.

Pep GUARDIOLA
Spain, coach
A league winner in Spain, Germany and England, the Spaniard is arguably the world's most influential coach, with tactics and ideas that are widely admired and copied.

Sunil GULATI
USA, FIFA Council member
Former US federation president, serving four terms until 2018, who is likely to play a key role in organising the 2026 World Cup. A full-time economics lecturer at Columbia University.



Protest...Ada Hegerberg took a stand over equal pay and refused to play at this year's World Cup

Draw...Giorgio Marchetti

Ada HEGERBERG
Norway, player
Judged to be the world's best female player in 2018 but refused to play for Norway at this year's World Cup in protest at the pay gap between Norway's women's and men's teams.

Luis HERNANDEZ
Cuba, FIFA Council member
Former international and the first Cuban to be elected to FIFA's executive.

Ramon JESURUN
Colombia, FIFA Council member
President of Colombia's football federation who is also vice-president of CONMEBOL. Is under investigation for alleged embezzlement and resale of tickets for Colombia's World Cup qualifying matches.

Dato Windsor JOHN
Malaysia, AFC general-secretary
Key administrative figure at the Asian Football Confederation.

Fritz KELLER
Germany, president of the DFB
Recently elected president of the German FA, replacing the accident-prone Reinhard Grindel. Formerly president of Freiburg, the winemaker and restaurateur is likely to play a key role in organising Euro 2024 in Germany.

Jurgen KLOPP
Germany, coach
Champions League winner and one of the world's most coveted coaches.

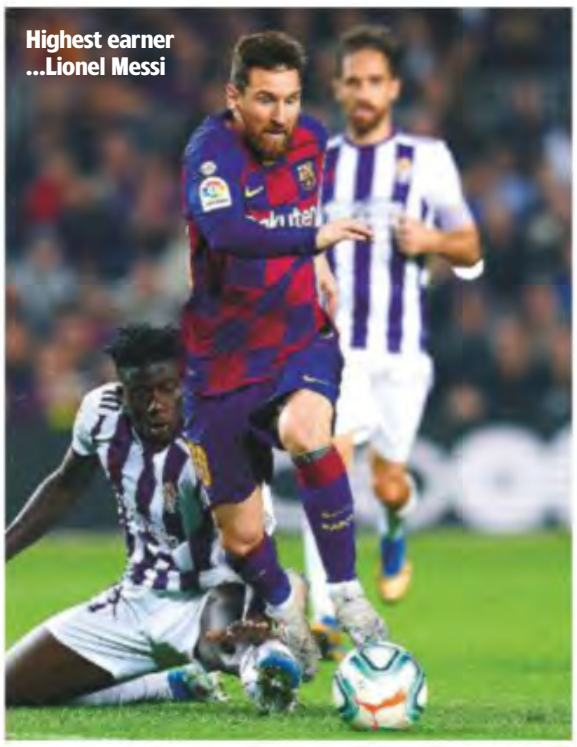
George KOUMAS
Cyprus, FIFA Council member
Businessman who has been Cyprus FA president since 2018, when he also joined the FIFA Council as a European representative.

Noel LE GRAET
France, FIFA Council member
French federation president since 2011 and a former president of Guingamp. Recently elected to FIFA Council to replace Reinhard Grindel.

Jack MA
China, owner Alibaba, FIFA sponsor
China's richest man whose company stepped in as a World Cup sponsor after western companies quit in the light of the FIFAgate scandal.

Lambert MALTOCK
Vanuatu, OFC president, FIFA Council member
Replaced the disgraced David Chung as OFC head in 2018.

Sheikh MANSOUR bin Zayed Al Nahyan
UAE, owner Manchester City
The Emirati royal has put more than £1.4billion into Man City since acquiring the club in 2008.


Highest earner ...Lionel Messi

Giorgio MARCHETTI
Italy, UEFA director of football and deputy general-secretary
The public face of UEFA at tournament draws as its director of club competitions.

Dietrich MATESCHITZ
Austria, businessman, club owner
Red Bull energy-drink entrepreneur and controversial owner of clubs in Germany (Leipzig), Austria (Salzburg) and USA (New York Red Bulls), as well as recently promoted Brazilian club Bragantino.

Jorge MENDES
Portugal, agent
The world's most powerful agent, representing virtually every key individual in Portuguese football, including Cristiano Ronaldo, Jose Mourinho and Joao Felix, as well as exerting influence at individual clubs such as Wolves.

Lionel MESSI
Argentina, player
Record-breaking, multiple award-winning superstar and the world's highest-paid player.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Gianni INFANTINO
Switzerland, FIFA president

Each one of the nine presidents of FIFA has reflected his era in not only football but sport in general. Gianni Infantino follows that trend as a smooth-operating, pragmatic autocrat perfectly suited to the demands of focusing attention on tomorrow while shutting out yesterday.

Infantino might beware how the likes of Stanley Rous, Joao Havelange and Sepp Blatter were all brought down eventually by their own hubris and arrogance. Whether he has had time to note that lesson while engaged in a jet-fuelled presidency, only time will tell.

The son of Italian immigrants to Switzerland, he was born in Brig on March 23, 1970 and studied law at the University of Fribourg before working at the International Center for Sports Studies as a stepping stone to the legal team at UEFA in 2000.

His mastery of a brief and linguistic skills combined with the importance of Champions League cash saw him promoted to head up the club licensing division, and Michel Platini's ousting of Lennart Johansson in 2007 opened more doors.

Platini brought in David Taylor as general-secretary and he appointed Infantino as deputy. A further job shuffle saw Infantino take the general-secretary's role and become the most powerful official in Nyon.

At that time Platini considered their partnership perfect. He saw himself as the man of ideas which he could instruct Infantino to bring to fruition – most notably, financial fairplay. But they also dreamed of taking their partnership to FIFA.

However, when Platini was caught up in the "disloyal payment" scandal, UEFA nominated Infantino to stand for FIFA president in the expectation Platini would soon be free to take up the candidacy. He wasn't, and Infantino stood in his own right, promising to quadruple development cash and expand the World Cup.

> He promised to quadruple development cash and expand the World Cup...and has been as good as his word

Infantino – whatever the criticisms of his style – has been as good as his word and was re-elected last summer. How many more re-elections depends on his ability to keep producing financial rabbits out of his Swiss-Italian hat.

Keir Radnedge

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Megan RAPINOE

USA, player

It is impossible to imagine a male version of Megan Rapinoe. No male World Cup winner has ever publicly confronted Donald Trump with the words: "You're excluding people who look like me...you need to do better for everyone."

Rapinoe could do or say no wrong after playing an instrumental role in the USA's victory over Holland in the 2019 World Cup Final. The 34-year-old, taking part in her third World Cup, had won both Golden Boot and Golden Ball as the tournament's top scorer and its best player.

Yet it is off the pitch that Rapinoe's impact has been most effective.

Rapinoe has been outspoken about LGBTQ rights as well as racial and gender equality. She began "taking the knee" during the national anthem at international matches in September 2016 in support of NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who took the action in protest at police brutality.

"I haven't experienced over-policing, racial profiling, police brutality or the sight of a family member's body lying dead in the street," Rapinoe says. "But I cannot stand idly by while there are people in this country who have had to deal with that kind of heartache.

"I can understand if you think that I'm disrespecting the flag by kneeling, but it is because of my utmost respect for the flag and the promise it represents that I have chosen to demonstrate in this way.

"I believe it is my responsibility, just as it is yours, to ensure that freedom is afforded to everyone in this country."

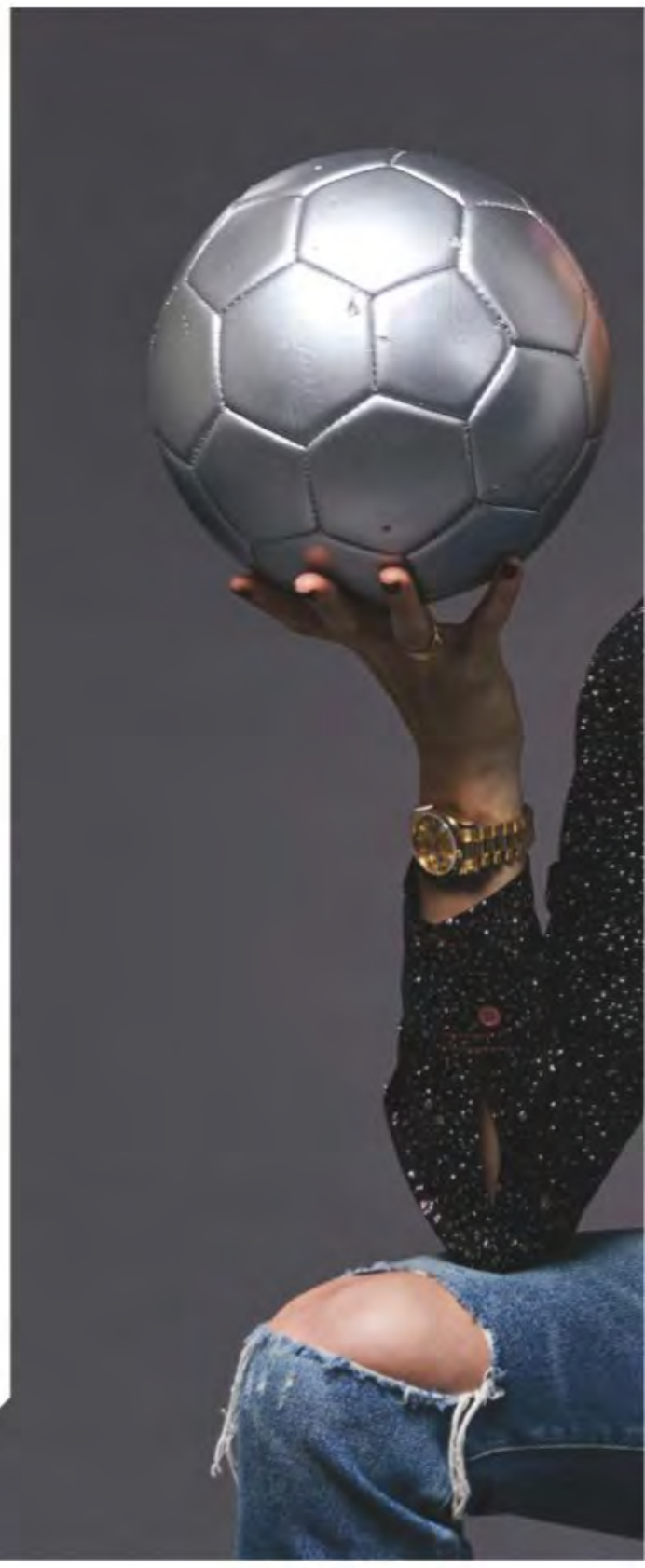
Rapinoe has also played a key role in the US women's campaign for equal pay with their male counterparts, arguing: "In 2019 I don't think equal pay is a very novel idea. I think people see how successful we've been and I think that they think we should be compensated for that."

> "People see how successful we've been and think we should be compensated"
> Rapinoe on the USA women's fight for equal pay

With national team-mate Alex Morgan, Rapinoe was the first female player to support the Common Goal project, donating one per cent of her earnings to charitable causes.

So, although the end of her illustrious playing career may be fast approaching, we will surely not have heard the last of Megan Rapinoe.

John Holmesdale



Philippe MOGGIO

Colombia, CONCACAF secretary-general

Former Davis Cup tennis player who has been CONCACAF's key administrator since 2016. Previously a senior executive with the NBA.

Victor MONTAGLIANI

Canada, CONCACAF president, FIFA Council member

Former Canadian FA president who has been leading attempts to clean up CONCACAF post Jack Warner. The first non-Caribbean president of CONCACAF since 1969.

Hajji MOUAD

Morocco, CAF general-secretary

A controversial appointment in April 2019 following the firing of Amr Fahmy, who was sacked after accusing CAF president Ahmad of taking bribes and misusing CAF funds. Has faced accusations that there is too much Moroccan influence within the African confederation.

Maria Sol MUNOZ

Ecuador, FIFA Council member

Lawyer who is the first female South American representative on the FIFA Council.

Youth plan... Marc Overmars

Final... Nestor Pitana

Praful PATEL
India, FIFA Council member
Elected to FIFA council earlier this year as an AFC rep, the first Indian to do so.

Rajesh PATEL
Fiji, FIFA Council member
One of the OFC's representatives on the FIFA Council, having been elected earlier this year.

Florentino PEREZ
Spain, Real Madrid president
Engineer and property developer who has overseen a hugely successful period for Real Madrid during his second spell at the helm.

Jerome PERLEMUTER
France, World Leagues Forum general-secretary
Lawyer and former French league official.

Philippe PIAT
France, FIFPro president
Former Strasbourg midfielder who has headed the global players' union since 2013.

Nestor PITANA
Argentina, referee
Took charge of the 2018 World Cup Final between France and Croatia.

Reinhard RAUBALL
Germany, Bundesliga president
Former Borussia Dortmund president who has headed the Bundesliga since 2007.

Mino RAIOLA
Italy, agent
Italo-Dutch fixer who has specialised in securing high-profile transfers for big-name clients, notably Paul Pogba, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Mario Balotelli and, most recently, Matthijs De Ligt.

Karl-Erik NILSSON
Sweden, UEFA vice-president
Former international referee who has been president of the Swedish FA since 2012 and a senior figure on the UEFA executive.

Lydia NSEKERA
Burundi, FIFA Council member
Former president of the Burundi federation who in 2012 became the first woman to be co-opted onto the FIFA executive.

Walter NYAMILANDU
Malawi, FIFA Council member
Former international defender who has been president of the Malawi FA since 2004. Defeated South African FA president Danny Jordaan to win a place on the FIFA Council in 2018.

Lars-Christer OLSSON
Sweden, European Leagues president
Former UEFA chief executive who, in his new role with European Leagues, has clashed with Europe's top clubs over their plans for a revamped Champions League, with more money and places earmarked for the richest clubs.

Constant OMARI
DR Congo, FIFA Council member
Close ally of CAF president Ahmad. Arrested in April 2019 on suspicion of embezzling Congolese FA funds. A FIFA Council member since 2015.

Jose OTIN
Spain, agent
His Bahia International agency represents many leading Spanish players, notably those involved in high-profile transfers to England, such as Kepa, Pedro and Dani Ceballos.

Marc OVERMARS
Holland, Ajax director of football
Former flying winger for Ajax, Arsenal, Barcelona and Holland and once again a central figure at Ajax, who continue to successfully promote youth from their academy, allowing them to compete with richer clubs.

First...Maria Sol Munoz

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Sheikh SALMAN bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa

Bahrain, AFC president, FIFA vice-president

The success of Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa in heading up the Asian confederation since 2013 has been enabled partly by the political and financial aggression of the Gulf's oil- and gas-rich states...and partly by the political inertia of China, Japan and South Korea in the Far East.

Salman, a scion of the ruling royal family of Bahrain, was born on November 2, 1965 and had played football as a teenager with no great success. This was to be found, instead, around the corridors of power where his eminence opened doors.

Winning the AFC presidency in 2013 was no simple matter. First, other hopefuls had to be persuaded to step aside, then Bahrain and his own human-rights records came under international media fire. Salman himself had to refute claims that national-team players who took part in pro-democracy, anti-regime protests in 2011 were arrested and tortured on his watch.

In the event, after weeks of accusations and counter-accusations, Salman won with a two-thirds majority in the first round of voting in Kuala Lumpur. He also defeated Hassan Al Thawadi of Qatar for a seat on the FIFA executive committee. Within two years he had moved to ensure that, in the future, the AFC president should also hold the region's FIFA vice-presidency. Game, set and match.

Obtaining the presidency was the toughest job and Salman has barely put a foot wrong in consolidating his power, including re-election in both 2015 and 2019. The only setback was in losing to Gianni Infantino in the FIFA election in 2016. But, even then, Salman pushed the Swiss-Italian to a second round.

The future for Asian football is bright. China hosts Infantino's first redeveloped Club World Cup in 2021 and Qatar stages its World Cup in 2022. If all goes well under the glare of the world spotlight then Salman might even start thinking again about the FIFA presidency.

Keir Radnedge

Salman has barely put a foot wrong in consolidating his power, including re-election in both 2015 and 2019

Cristiano RONALDO
Portugal, player
The world's most recognisable footballer and a league winner in England, Spain and Italy.

Kasper RORSTED
Denmark, CEO adidas
Boss of FIFA's long-term sponsor, kit supplier and commercial partner.

Luis RUBIALES
Spain, RFEF president, UEFA vice-president
Key figure leading a new era at the Spanish federation following the departure of Angel Maria Villar Llona. A former player who had a brief spell at Scottish club Hamilton Academical, he is currently pushing controversial plans for the Spanish Super Cup to be held in Saudi Arabia.

Leading role...Japanese FA president and FIFA Council member Kozo Tashima

Partner...Kasper Rorsted

Karl-Heinz RUMMENIGGE
Germany, Bayern Munich chairman
Former West Germany superstar, twice voted European Footballer of the Year, who is the most powerful figure at Bayern following Uli Hoeness' recent retirement. Remains an important influence within the ECA.

Fatma SAMOURA
Senegal, FIFA secretary-general
The most powerful woman in football and FIFA's first female secretary-general. A former diplomat and UN official who was, because of her lack of football experience, a surprise choice by Gianni Infantino to head FIFA's administration when he assumed the FIFA presidency in 2016. Recently seconded from Zurich to run the crisis-hit African confederation.

Fernando SARNEY
Brazil, FIFA Council member
The son of former state president Jose Sarney, he replaced Marco Polo Del Nero on the FIFA Council in 2015 following Del Nero's involvement in the FIFA corruption scandal.

Dejan SAVICEVIC
Montenegro, FIFA Council member
Former Yugoslavia international, star of Milan's 1994 European Cup Final victory, who has headed the Montenegrin federation since 2004.

Christian SEIFERT
Germany, Bundesliga CEO
Long-serving Bundesliga boss (since 2004), he has been a vocal critic – through his chairmanship of the World Leagues Forum – of Gianni Infantino's plan for an expanded Club World Championship.

Maryam SHOJAEI
Iran, campaigner
Founder of the #NoBan4Women movement, campaigning for the admission of women supporters to stadiums in Iran.

Alexey SOROKIN
Russia, FIFA Council member
Former Russian FA official who headed Russia's 2018 World Cup organisation. Elected to the FIFA Council in 2017, regaining a place for Russia that was lost when government politician Vitaly Mutko was barred.

Volker STRUTH
Germany, agent
Germany's leading agent, with clients including Marco Reus and Toni Kroos.

Davor SUKER
Croatia, president of Croatian FA
Former national-team striker who is halfway through his second term as Croatia federation president. Elected to UEFA's executive committee in 2015.

Kozo TASHIMA
Japan, FIFA Council member
President of Japanese FA and a FIFA Council member since 2015.

Javier TEBAS
Spain, La Liga president
Head of the Spanish top flight since 2013 and a controversial figure who has been pushing for La Liga games to be played overseas. Also expressed support for Spain's far-right Vox party.

Theodore THEODORIDIS
Greece, UEFA general-secretary
Replaced Gianni Infantino at UEFA and given the permanent job by Aleksander Ceferin.

Philip TOWNSEND
England, UEFA communications director
UEFA's media relations chief. Previously in the same role at Manchester United.

Arsene WENGER
France, FIFA head of global football development
Former Arsenal boss is now the highest-ranking football person at FIFA.

Johanna WOOD
New Zealand, FIFA Council member
One of two Oceania representatives on the FIFA Council. The first New Zealander there since Charlie Dempsey.

Michael ZORC
Germany, Borussia Dortmund sporting director
The mastermind behind Dortmund's highly profitable transfer and scouting policy.

Mastermind... Michael Zorc

6 of the best

Surprise packets

Nick Bidwell selects the key players for some of this season's unexpected successes

1 Ruben LAMEIRAS

FAMALICAO

The career of the 24-year-old Lisbon-born wide-man comes in two distinct phases.

First, there was his development path in the UK, where he featured for the academy teams at Millwall, Arsenal, Chelsea, Birmingham City and Tottenham Hotspur before enjoying some success in England's lower leagues with Coventry City and Plymouth Argyle. And then, following a move back to his homeland last summer, his first taste of top-flight football with newly promoted overachievers Famalicao.

Normally lining up on the right flank, but equally at home on the left or as an inside-forward, he is tricky and imaginative, particularly dangerous when driving forward from deep positions. He also knows how to finish, notably with a fine goal in Famalicao's stunning 2-1 win at Sporting in September.

2 Darwin MACHIS

GRANADA

There was never any chance of the Venezuelan winger feeling alienated on swapping Italian side Udinese for the La Liga new boys in the summer.

An example of the frenetic player merry-go-round that is the football network set up by the Pozzo family – comprising Udinese, Granada in Spain and Premier League Watford – the 26-year-old is now in his third spell with Granada and has already switched clubs an incredible 15 times in his professional career.

Clearly delighted to be back on familiar turf, he has proved to be one of the key components in Granada's emergence this term as shock pacesetters. He gave a five-star display in the Andalusians' impressive 2-0 home victory over Barcelona in September, a game in which he left opposition full-backs Nelson Semedo and Sergi Roberto dazed, confused and defeated.

3 Nikolay KOMLICHENKO

MLADA BOLESLAV

Increasing numbers of European club scouts are reported to be trekking to the Czech Republic to run the rule over the strapping 24-year-old Russian striker. For the last 18 months he has been nothing less than a chance-taking tornado, winning his domestic league's Golden Boot with 24 goals last season and continuing that trend this term.

While his Bohemian club might not have the prestige and honours board of Prague giants Sparta and Slavia, Mlada Boleslav have no difficulty punching above their weight thanks to his goals. The only question now is whether he moves on in the January transfer window.

He came through the youth system at Russian side Krasnodar, who allowed him to leave in July 2017, and recently made his full debut for Russia against Scotland.

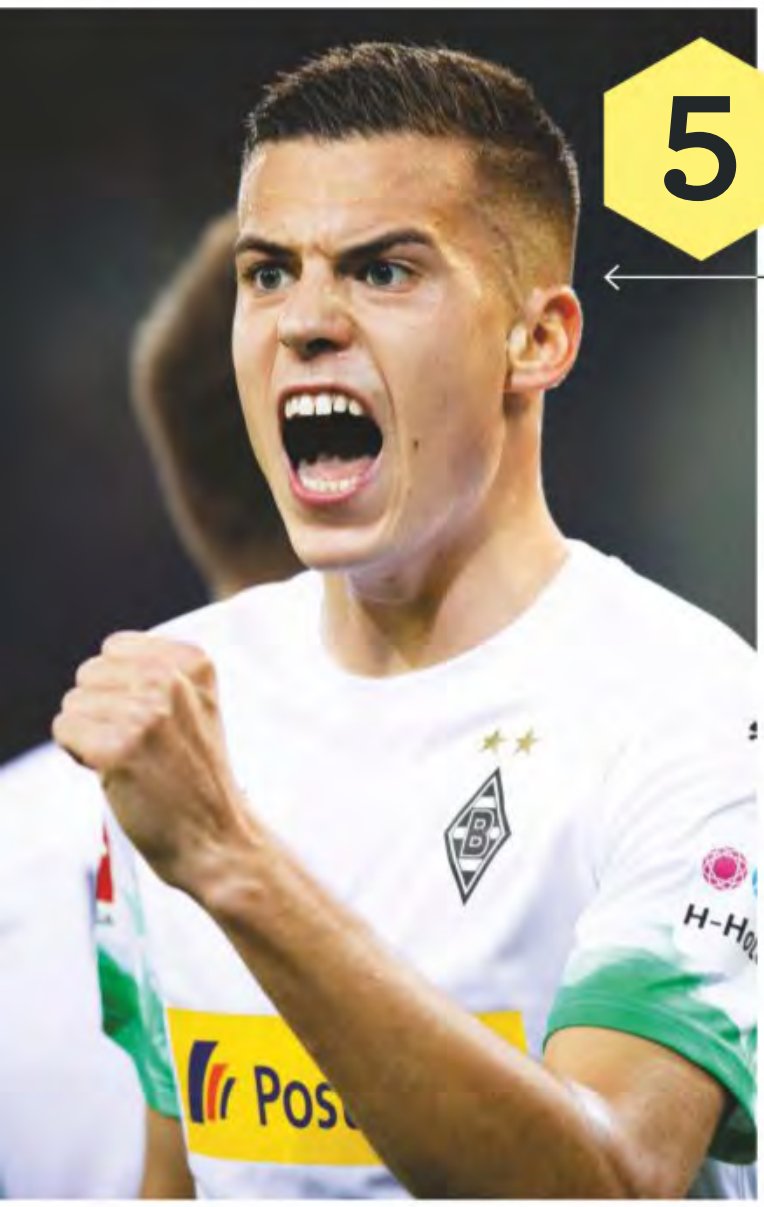
4 Eldor SHOMURODOV

ROSTOV

Hopes are high on the banks of the river Don for a first-ever Russian title for Rostov in an especially open championship race this season.

Bought from Bunyodkor in 2017, the 24-year-old Uzbek striker produced little of note in his first two seasons, usually confined to the bench and scoring just five goals. But it's a different story this term, having supplanted Iceland's Bjorn Sigurdarson as leader of the line. Confident and sharp, he scored a brilliant goal against Dynamo Moscow in September, cushioning a header to himself at the far post and then volleying home from an acute angle.

He also scored four times for his country at this year's Asian Cup.



5 Laszlo BENES

BORUSSIA MONCHENGLADBACH

In just a few short months the 22-year-old Slovak central midfielder has gone from the fringes at Borussia to a pivotal first-team role for the Bundesliga frontrunners.

Now in his fourth campaign on Gladbach's books after joining from Slovakia's MSK Zilina in July 2016, he played just 28 first-team minutes last term and spent the second half of the campaign on loan at second-tier Holstein Kiel. In truth, all he really needed was a break, and it was an inspired choice by new Gladbach coach Marco Rose to make him a regular starter.

Without fuss and fanfare, he is one of those visionary players who knit things together. Equipped with a great first touch, wide-angle vision and a wonderful range of pass, he is also strong in the tackle. If he could add goalscoring to his wide repertoire, "Laci" would be the finished article.

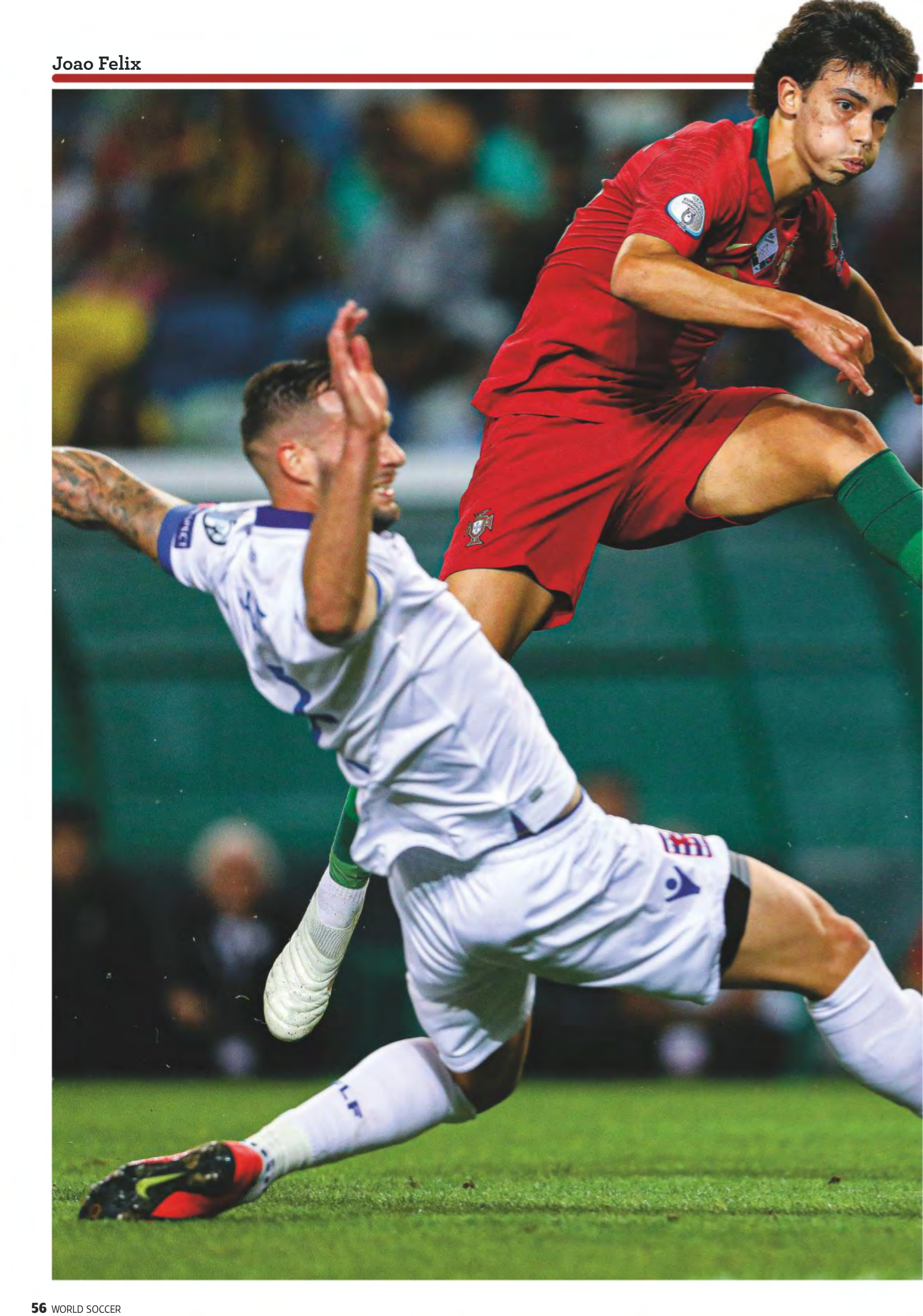
6 Nicolas PALLOIS

NANTES

The skipper of the Ligue 1 high fliers represents the very heart and soul of the Stade de la Beaujoire outfit.

Up until quite recently the Gallic media never tired of portraying the 32-year-old as an oafish destroyer who would happily kick anything that moved. These days, though, no one seems to care about his inelegant ways, preferring to laud him for his granite physicality and never-say-die spirit.

Previously with Valenciennes, Laval, Niort and Bordeaux, he used to earn a living as a carpenter and supermarket worker but was recently called up by France boss Didier Deschamps who said: "He's a warrior. I want to see the fire he has in his belly."



The Portuguese boy wonder

WORDS Tom Kundert

Atletico Madrid's teen sensation is the third-most expensive player of all time

A global superstar in waiting or a classic case of too much too soon?

Recent history shows that it could go either way as Joao Felix follows in the footsteps of Bernardo Silva and Renato Sanches in making the journey from Benfica's famed Seixal academy to one of the world's biggest, richest and most high-profile clubs. While Silva is thriving at Manchester City, Sanches is struggling to piece his career back together after three wasted years at Bayern Munich.

With such sharply contrasting examples to hold up as evidence, the projected success of Felix's move to Atletico Madrid has been heatedly discussed in the Portuguese media, with opinions ranging from it being a natural step up for a generational talent to it being a bad decision given the ▸

defensive style associated with Diego Simeone's teams, where the attacking flair that Felix possesses in abundance will take a back seat to physicality and tactical rigidity.

And that is before any mention of the transfer fee itself, which accounted for endless column inches. Even in the backdrop of today's grotesquely inflated transfer market, the €126million Atletico paid was an extraordinary sum for a 19-year-old who had been a Benfica starter for half a season. Former Sporting and Benfica coach Manuel Jose was moved to comment: "The insane transfer market has led to these amounts, but they are immoral prices. No player the age of Joao Felix is worth that much money."

But Joao Tralhao, the Benfica youth-team coach who oversaw the youngster's development, has a different point of view, arguing: "A fee like this is only possible for players with exceptional talent in all dimensions. Joao is a young player but a complete player."

> "Joao will win the Ballon d'Or in the next few years, and he will without doubt be on the shortlist to win it on multiple occasions"
> **Benfica president Luis Filipe Vieira**

And Benfica president Luis Filipe Vieira went even further, predicting "Joao will win the Ballon d'Or in the next few years, and he will without doubt be on the shortlist to win it on multiple occasions".

It is common practice to set the release clause in the contracts of young players at an exaggeratedly high price; clubs do so both as a means of protection from being prematurely deprived of their prized assets and also to give themselves a strong bargaining position. But while it is rare for the clause to be met, Atletico stumped up the full amount. In July this year, Felix relocated from the Portuguese capital to the Spanish one, becoming the third-most expensive player in football history.

For all the discussion regarding the wisdom of the move and whether Felix's career would have been better served staying another season at home, there is a prosaic reason why the deal went through: it was simply too good an offer for club or player to refuse.

Despite the fans' disquiet at Benfica's "sell, sell, sell" policy, most in Lisbon recognised the club could not pass up pocketing a gargantuan fee for a player who cost nothing and had only been on the books for three years. And from Felix and his family's standpoint, Atletico's seven-year contract sees him earn a minimum of €6m a year. It was impossible to turn down.

Born in Viseu, in central Portugal, the city that spawned one of the country's best-ever footballers in Paulo Sousa, Felix attracted attention from a tender age playing for local club Os Pestinhas, triggering the traditional scrum among the *Tres Grandes* of Benfica, Sporting and Porto, who constantly battle one another to attract the most talented kids. It was

Derby day... celebrating a goal against Sporting

Faith...Benfica youth coach Joao Tralhao

Timeline

SEP 17, 2016
At 16, becomes the youngest player to represent Benfica's reserve side, coming on as a sub against Freamunde in the second tier.

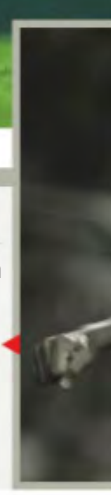
APR 24, 2017
UEFA Youth League runner-up as Benfica lose 2-1 to Red Bull Salzburg in the Final.

JUN 14, 2017
Comes on to make his debut for Portugal's under-18s as a 58th-minute sub and scores twice in a 3-0 victory over Norway.

OCT 10, 2017
Makes his debut for Portugal's under-21s in a 3-1 loss to Bosnia.

AUG 18, 2018
Makes his first-team debut as Benfica win 2-0 at Boavista.

AUG 25, 2018
Gets his first Primeira Liga goal, against Sporting, and becomes the youngest player to score in the Lisbon derby.



the Dragons who beat off competition from Lisbon, though, and Felix spent eight years getting his early football education in the north before Porto decided he was too lightweight to make it in the professional game. But allowing the youngster to move south and join arch-rivals Benfica would prove to be a monumental mistake.

His progress in Benfica's youth ranks soon made it clear a very special talent was being honed. In September 2016, two months shy of his 17th birthday, he became the youngest player to debut for Benfica B, who play in Portugal's second tier. And when he scored his first goal – against his home-town club Academico de Viseu – he became the youngest-ever goalscorer in Portugal's Segunda Liga.

Next generation...this season's under-15 side at Benfica's famed Seixal academy

Blessed with wonderful technique and vision, Felix can prise open defences with his piercing and creative use of the ball when dropping deep. His clever touch and ability to pick a pass has drawn comparisons with another Benfica and Portugal great, Rui Costa, although Felix himself says he models his game on Brazilian midfielder Kaka, a player to whom he bears a striking resemblance.

But over and above his potential to wreak havoc in midfield, it is his prolific goalscoring that stands out. Instinctively finding space between defenders, shooting powerfully and accurately with both feet, and showing strength in the air despite his slight frame, his goal threat has proven too varied and too clever for opposition defences to nullify. In a seamless progression through Benfica's under-17, under-19 and B teams, he scored 50 goals in 100 games.

The transition from youth football to senior football is rarely smooth but Felix's adaptation to life at the top table was the exception that proved the rule. His league debut at the Estadio da Luz came in front of 60,000 fans against city rivals Sporting in the first big match of the 2018-19 season. He was introduced as a late substitute, with the hosts trailing, and duly rescued a point with a thumping header on the run. The Benfica faithful had a new darling.

However, it was only when Rui Vitoria was sacked and new coach Bruno Lage took over at the turn of the year that Felix truly exploded onto the scene.

Having himself been promoted from the B team, Lage knew Felix inside out and knew exactly how to get the most from him. "When I got the job the first thing I thought was I'm going to get this kid playing," said Lage in the wake of the tremendously successful season

Wise words...with Benfica boss Bruno Lage

APR 11, 2019

Becomes the youngest player to score a hat-trick in the Europa League, in a 4-2 win over Eintracht Frankfurt, aged 19 years and 152 days.

MAY 18, 2019

Scores in a 4-1 win over Santa Clara on the final day of the season as Benfica claim the league title.

Tough...challenged by Hugo Mallo of Celta Vigo

for both of them. Moved from an attacking midfield role to second striker, Felix struck up a telepathic understanding with forwards Haris Seferovic and Rafa Silva to turn Benfica into a devastating attacking machine.

Felix scored in crucial wins away at Sporting and Porto as the Eagles made a spectacular recovery, winning 18 and drawing one of 19 matches to rein in a seven-point deficit to Porto and lift the championship. He ended the season with 20 goals in 43 matches, as well as 11 assists. He also became the youngest player to score a hat-trick in the Europa League, putting three past Eintracht Frankfurt in the first leg of the quarter-finals in Lisbon. All in his debut season, and at 19 years of age.

His phenomenal impact catapulted him to the status of the hottest teenage property in world football and rumours inevitably began swirling, linking the tritely named "new Ronaldo" with big-money transfers to most of Europe's elite clubs. So it was no surprise when the deal taking Felix to Atletico was sealed in July – even though the price tag certainly was.

> "Felix is a kid who has the potential to get there. He's a 19-year-old kid who is humble and understands he can't play every minute"
>
> **Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone**

Patience...he will have to bide his time in Madrid

A strong start in pre-season, including goals against Juventus and Real Madrid in the International Champions Cup, suggested that Felix was on course to continue his bump-free ascension to the very top of the game.

Coming hot on the heels of his debut for Portugal in the UEFA Nations League, a degree of Felix-mania was evident in the Portuguese media. He was frequently referred to as the heir apparent to Cristiano Ronaldo, Atletico Madrid shirts bearing his name became a common sight on the streets and in stadiums, and Viseu municipal council even held a ceremony paying homage to him and making him an official ambassador of the city.

But a mediocre beginning to the season proper brought expectations down to more realistic levels. He scored three goals in his first 11 appearances for Atleti, in which he was substituted eight times, with niggling injury problems

JUN 5, 2019

Makes his senior international debut, against Switzerland in the Nations League semi-finals.

JUL 3, 2019

Signs a seven-year contract with Atletico Madrid.

AUG 19, 2019

Makes his competitive debut for Atletico in a 1-0 win against Getafe.

SEP 1, 2019

Scores his first La Liga goal in a 3-2 victory over Eibar.

holding him back. Simeone has had to field constant questions about his micro-management of the club's marquee signing and revealed that he has made a point of explaining to the Portuguese teenager that the path to success will be far from straightforward.

"At Atletico you need to prepare the minds of players, so Joao has to be told the reality," says the Argentinian coach. "The problem is he's compared to Griezmann who is practically a Ballon d'Or player, whereas Felix is a kid who has the potential to get there. He's a 19-year-old kid who is humble and understands he can't play every minute."

Felix's performances in Spain thus far have showcased flashes of his effervescent excellence but there have also been games in which he has struggled to make an impact, fuelling the debate about whether the move to Atletico was the best choice to nurture an uncommon talent. It is legitimate to

Success...with the UEFA Nations League

question whether he can flourish in an inherently defensive team. But given his career to date, it is also not unreasonable to assume he has the natural talent to blossom in any tactical system.

In attempting to objectively gauge Felix's potential and his chances of fully realising it, perhaps the biggest clues come from the people who know him best.

Pedro Marques is the technical director of Benfica's Seixal academy, and rather than Felix's technical ability, vision on the pitch or composure in front of goal, Marques cites his attitude and his support network as key elements behind his rise.

"I think it's down to his work ethic, his talent and the way he has been nurtured at the Seixal academy," says Marques.

"At all levels, even in the younger age groups, he always gave maximum effort to develop his ability.

"Moreover, he's had the social support and the right people to complement his stable personality and these factors have contributed to his success." WS

Joao Felix

the numbers game

PORTUGAL

4

CAPS

GOALS

0

MOST EXPENSVE PLAYERS

€222m	NEYMAR (Barcelona to PSG, 2017)
€135m	KYLIAN MBAPPE (Monaco to PSG, 2018)
€126m	JOAO FELIX (Benfica to Atletico Madrid, 1999)
€120m	ANTOINE GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid to Barcelona, 2019)
€120m	PHILIPPE COUTINHO (Liverpool to Barcelona, 2018)

PORTUGUESE PRIMERA

Breakthrough player of the year

2014	WILLIAM CARVALHO (Sporting)
2015	OLIVER TORRES (Porto)
2016	RENATO SANCHES (Benfica)
2017	NELSON SEMEDO (Benfica)
2018	RUBEN DIAS (Benfica)
2019	JOAO FELIX (Benfica)

UEFA YOUTH LEAGUE FINALS

2014	Barcelona 3	0 Benfica
2015	Chelsea 3	2 Shakhtar Donetsk
2016	Chelsea 2	1 Paris Saint-Germain
2017	Red Bull Salzburg 2	1 Benfica
2018	Barcelona 3	0 Chelsea
2019	Porto 3	1 Chelsea

GAMES GOALS *(up to & inc 17.11.19)*

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout

WINGERS

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Takumi MINAMINO

Age 24 (16.01,95), Red Bull Salzburg (Aut) & Japan

In a sentence
A pinball-like performer with the widest radius of influence, he achieved the extraordinary feat in his side's 4-3 Champions League loss to Liverpool of making the usually watertight Anfield defence look distinctly ordinary.

What they say
Christoph Freund, Salzburg's director of sport: "Minamino is a very important player for us and a super guy. Takumi has developed into a real leader of the team. He understands everything, makes great runs and works hard when we're not in possession. He's an absolute team player."

Salzburg coach Jesse Marsch: "He has an important role to play in our team. He is very versatile, he is effective in all areas of the attacking third. Normally he's a calm, quiet guy, but on the pitch he has a lot to say."

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT MINAMINO

- He believes his best goals are those when he cuts inside from the right flank and lets fly.
- Whenever he feels homesick he goes on shopping expeditions to nearby Munich for Japanese food.
- He draws inspiration from forwards of a similar build – Aguero, Griezmann, Hazard – but growing up his favourite player was Japanese attacking midfielder Yoichiro Kakitani.

Story so far
Born in Izumisano in the Osaka region of southern Japan, he began to make a name for himself in the junior ranks of local club Sessel Kumatori. Inducted into the academy of J.League team Cerezo Osaka at 15, he made his first-team debut two years later in the latter stages of the 2012 season. The following campaign he established himself as an automatic starter and was voted the league's rookie of the year.

With the hype machine in overdrive, the teenager could not quite live up to expectations and was unable to prevent a misfiring Cerezo – who also featured Uruguayan forward Diego Forlan – from slipping out of the top flight. Shortly afterwards, a week before his 20th birthday, Salzburg paid €750,000 for his services and he has enjoyed many prime-time moments in the Austrian city, notably winning five straight domestic league titles and a semi-final appearance in the 2018 Europa League.

Previously used as an impact sub or deployed as an attacking midfielder or striker, new Salzburg coach Jesse Marsch prefers him wide on the right, although he also has used him as a number 10.

He made his Japan debut in 2015 and then went three years without another call-up before becoming a mainstay of the national side.

The next step
With only 18 months left on his contract, and in the absence of an extension, Austrian champions Salzburg will have no choice but to cash in next summer.

Strengths
Creative, quick-witted, great work ethic.

Weaknesses
Can be physically outgunned. Prone to putting speed before precision.

> "He has an important role to play in our team... normally he's a calm, quiet guy, but on the pitch he has a lot to say" Salzburg coach Jesse Marsch

Francis AMUZU

Age 20 (23.08.99), Anderlecht & Belgium
Determined to give first-team opportunities to as many homegrown talents as possible, Anderlecht have come up trumps with the Belgo-Ghanaian left-winger. A big favourite of the Parc Astrid crowd, he may be rather lightweight and lack coolness in front of goal, but he is a nightmare for full-backs with his tricks, feints and instantaneous changes of direction.

Calvin STENGS

Age 20 (18.12.98), AZ & Holland
It says it all that the Dutch under-21's agent is Mino Raiola, a man who does not run the affairs of duds. After suffering a cruciate-ligament injury early in his career, he is firing on all cylinders again for AZ. A left-footer who operates on the right, he has explosive pace and an ability to glide past opponents.

Mounir CHOUIAR

Age 20 (23.01.99), Dijon & France
Left-sided wide man who boosted his reputation with a goal in his side's 2-1 win over Paris Saint-Germain. He came through the ranks at Lens and chose Dijon this summer ahead of Monaco, Angers and Parma. The son of Moroccan and Mauritanian parents, he is a French under-20 cap.

TETE

Age 19 (15.02.00), Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) & Brazil
Cutting in from the right wing to shoot accurately with his left foot is a predictable manoeuvre, yet defenders – even those at the highest level – seem unable to stop him. Nicknamed "The Hurricane" in his homeland, the under-20 international was previously with Gremio, and cost Shakhtar Donetsk €10m when they signed him earlier this year.

PEDRINHO

Age 21 (13.04.98), Corinthians & Brazil
The Brazilian left-footer has a surprisingly large number of detractors, with naysayers claiming he is not big enough for the European game. Rumours, however, abound that Corinthians are looking to sell him in January, possibly to a team in France.

Ferran TORRES

Age 19 (29.02.00), Valencia & Spain
Right-wing ace who earned universal man-of-the-match plaudits for his exceptional performance in Valencia's 4-1 win over Lille in the Champions League. He gives his side a large dose of directness and change of rhythm, and scored both goals as Spain saw off Portugal in the Final of this year's Euro Under-19s.

RAPHINHA

Age 22 (14.12.96), Rennes (Fra) & Brazil
Still finding his feet in Ligue 1 after moving from Portuguese giants Sporting for €21m, he is a tremendously exciting prospect. Discovered by ex Porto, Barcelona and Portugal playmaker-turned-agent Deco, who negotiated his switch in 2016 from Brazilian side Avai to Vitoria Guimaraes in Portugal.

Matias VARGAS

Age 22 (08.05.97), Espanyol (Spa) & Argentina
His father was of the opinion that football was a hit-or-miss career path, but Vargas junior has turned out to be a brilliant left winger. Crossed the Atlantic in the close season, quitting Velez Sarsfield for Espanyol. In the throes of establishing himself in the senior Argentinian squad.

Glenn Moore

Courage flourish after heading south

Franchise moves pay off for reborn clubs

The franchise system may be anathema to Europeans, but in the context of US women's soccer it appears to work. It is not without casualties, but it serves as an effective substitute source of renewal to the promotion-relegation process of the sport's traditional heartlands. Further evidence of this came in the seventh season of the NWSL.

After winning the 2016 championship, Western New York Flash were uprooted to Cary, a 650-mile drive south, and renamed North Carolina Courage. The move was tough on Flash fans, but there were not enough of them. As Courage, the franchise have reached three more championship Finals and won the last two, confirming their status as North America's premier team with a 4-0 defeat of Chicago Red Stars in this year's Final. Paul Riley's team also retained the regular-season shield and, significantly, drew attendances that were 52 per cent higher than the final season as Flash.

Utah Royals, in their second season since replacing Kansas City, became the second NWSL club to post average five-figure crowds. Their regular 10,774 was more than five times higher than their last season in Kansas.

Shorter moves also paid off. After drawing 37,000-plus across two matches at MLS club DC United's Audi Field home, Washington Spirit have stepped up plans to leave Germantown, which has been their base since founding but is in Maryland, 25 miles outside the national capital and holds less than 4,000. In time all Spirit's games are likely to be in DC, but movement will be staggered.

Hoping for similar success are Sky Blue, whose facilities have long been criticised. They have agreed a deal to share stadia with MLS club New York Red Bulls.

Reign FC, who dropped the Seattle name from their title after going 35 miles south to Tacoma, achieved the highest average attendance in their history with a 36 per cent rise on last season. They also made the play-offs with Macedonian-born Vlatko Andonovski named coach of the year and then successor to Jill Ellis in charge of the national team.

Reign took Courage the distance in the semi-final, Ifeoma Onumonu's injury-time equaliser cancelling out Heather O'Reilly's 88th-minute penalty. However, Courage scored three times in eight minutes in extra-time. In the other semi-final Chicago Red Stars edged past Portland Thorns with the only goal coming from Sam Kerr, her 19th of the summer.

> [Western New York Flash]'s move was tough on Flash fans, but there were not enough of them

However, Kerr – Golden Boot winner for the third successive season – was kept quiet in the Final as Courage romped to victory. The outstanding Debinha scored early, Jessica McDonald and Crystal Dunn made it 3-0 at half-time, and Sam Mewis completed the rout.

With the match played at Courage's home ground in Cary it was a fitting conclusion to O'Reilly's glittering career. The former North Carolina student, who won 230 US caps, a trio of Olympic gold medals, the 2015 World Cup and four US domestic titles, took her leave in the 89th minute to a standing ovation.

"What a way to end the year and what a way to end my career," said the 34-year-old, who also won the FA Cup with Arsenal. "Seventeen years ago I scored my first national-team goal on this field. It's been quite a ride and I'm very grateful."

Courage finished five points clear in the regular season with a 6-0 win at Portland Thorns summing up their superiority. Lynn Williams scored 12 goals, Debinha 10.

Surprisingly, Abby Dahlkemper was the only Courage player named in the NWSL Best XI. Neither Debinha or Williams even made the second string, despite being among five nominations for MVP, which was won by Kerr.

Rose Lavelle, despite playing only six NWSL matches and scoring one goal, was in the Best XI; Megan Rapinoe (five games, no goals or assists) and Kelley O'Hara (four games) were in the second team. All three, of course, featured prominently in USA's World Cup win but even Lavelle's mother admitted she had not voted for her daughter.

Does this really matter? Well, yes, because inclusion in these teams is one of the eligibility criteria for the league's new "allocation money", a way of bringing in a star player without smashing the salary cap. While insufficient to keep Kerr in the US it should help resist the growing

Final...Samantha Mewis (on ground) scores Courage's fourth goal against Chicago Red Stars

Support...a sell-out crowd of 19,471 watch Washington Spirit take on Orlando Pride

Courage star...Abby Dahlkemper

lure of European clubs.

Allocation money was part of a raft of changes that raised minimum pay by around 20 per cent to $20,000 and the maximum level by $3,800 to $50,000. A club could now spend $1million a year on salaries, plus free housing.

Revealing the impact, Washington Spirit keeper Audrey Bledsoe said when she was a rookie and the minimum level was $6,000, friends would ask when she would "quit and get a real job", adding: "Now I can pay for dinner for everyone and say, 'how's your 9-5 treating you?'"

NWSL owners' collective confidence in their product extends to growing the league. Joining in 2021 are Proof Louisville FC, their name a nod to the Kentucky city's bourbon whiskey heritage. Another franchise may yet join for 2020, possibly Sacramento, though time is running out to be ready for next season.

If it happens, great, if not NWSL can wait. The league will be around the following season – which is not something it could say with confidence in the early years. WS

Round-up

Last eight... Barcelona will face Atletico Madrid (in red)

SPANISH DUEL IN EUROPE

The draw for the last eight of the UEFA Women's Champions League threw up an all-Spanish tie with Atletico Madrid, conquerors of Manchester City for the second successive season, paired with Barcelona, last year's losing finalists. In the semi-finals the winners will play Wolfsburg or Glasgow City.

In the other half of the draw, holders Lyon will meet Bayern Munich while Arsenal face Paris Saint-Germain.

Ada Hegerberg set a new scoring record during Lyon's 11-0 aggregate win over Fortuna Hjorring, equalling Anja Mittag's mark of 51 goals in the first leg and adding two more in the second.

New Blue... Sam Kerr

KERR JOINS CHELSEA

In a coup for the WSL, Australia's Sam Kerr signed a two-and-a-half year deal with Chelsea. The all-time leading scorer in both Australian and American leagues, Kerr had been playing for both Perth Glory and Chicago Red Stars. She will be available when the transfer window opens in January.

JAMAICAN INTERNATIONAL KILLED IN ALTERCATION

Tarania Clarke, who had scored on her international debut in September, has died after an altercation in Kingston, the Jamaican capital. Police said the 20-year-old was stabbed in a dispute over a mobile phone.

Tragic... Tarania Clarke

Champions...Corinthians

CORINTHIANS WIN SOUTH AMERICAN TITLE

The expanded 16-club Copa Libertadores Femenina was won by Corinthians, the Brazilian giant, who defeated compatriots Ferroviaria 2-0 in the Final in Quito, Ecuador.

REVENUE DEAL FOR MATILDAS

The Australian team agreed a landmark deal that will bring basic earnings for leading internationals in line with male counterparts ($83,000), a 40 per cent share of prize money earned and an equal hourly rate for domestic players.

The Matildas and Socceroos will also share commercial revenues and receive matching treatment when it comes to travel and other support. Disparities do remain, however, with a huge variation in FIFA prize money while domestic male players are contracted for four times as many hours.

SHABAB WIN INAUGURAL TITLE

The impact of hosting events was underlined when Jordan launched their first competitions for women in the wake of hosting the Women's Under-17 World Cup and Women's Asian Cup.

Shabab Al Ordon won the double, defeating Amman SC 1-0 in both the league play-off and the cup Final.

SPANISH STRIKE ACTION

La Liga clubs agreed to reopen talks after a players' strike wiped out an entire weekend programme. Players want a minimum annual wage of €20,000 (€12,000 for part-timers), plus improved ancillary support.

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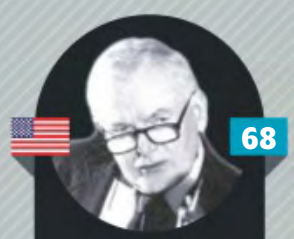

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United States

PAUL GARDNER

The wait for a classic goes on

Seattle win disappointing season finale

This year was the third time Seattle Sounders and Toronto had met in the MLS Cup Final – and the wait for a classic encounter goes on.

In 2016 Seattle won the shoot-out after a goalless draw while Toronto had their revenge a year later with a 2-0 victory, but both games were flat and forgettable.

The 2019 finale drew an impressive crowd of 69,724 to CenturyLink Field in Seattle, but Sounders' 3-1 success was something of a surprise, with Toronto dominating the first half and the hosts looking decidedly nervous.

The 0-0 scoreline at half-time seemed farcical and the sense of unreality got stronger when, 12 minutes into the second half, Seattle opened the scoring.

When defender Kelvin Leerdam slammed the ball hard and low across the Toronto goalmouth – maybe a shot, maybe a pass – it was deflected by not one but two Toronto players before ending up in the net. And the oddity of the goal was increased further when, rather than being ruled an own goal, it was given to Surinamese full-back Leerdam. Seattle's Raul Ruidiaz was even credited with an assist.

Seattle pulled further in front with goals from Victor Rodriguez and Ruidiaz, and although Jozy Altidore got a Toronto consolation in injury time it was hardly a game to be remembered.

The true excitement at the end of the season came in the play-offs, with Atlanta (playing in their third MLS season) and Los Angeles FC (a second MLS season) strong favourites.

LAFC had won the 2019 Supporters Shield for the team with the best regular season record, finishing eight points clear of second-place New York City.

The reigning champions Atlanta, so sparkling and attack-minded in 2018, spent most of the season struggling to adapt to new coach Frank De Boer's more defensive tactics and opponents were no longer being swept away.

Ibrahimovic and Rooney's readiness to return to Europe confirms a feeling celebrity imports do not take MLS seriously

Under new MLS rules, the play-offs are now a single game, which was a big help for Atlanta. Their superior regular-season points total gave them home advantage and narrow wins in dour games against New England (1-0) and Philadelphia (2-0) moved them into the semi-finals against Toronto.

No one had expected Toronto to get this far. They had only finished fourth in the Eastern conference and had been eight points behind Atlanta.

But the play-off system favours teams in form at the end of the season and Toronto, unbeaten in 10 previous games, made it 11 wins with a stunning 2-1 victory.

An exciting team, playing all year with tremendous brio, LAFC had scored 85 goals during the season – 12 more than anyone else – and their big test in the play-offs came against local rivals LA Galaxy. In five past meetings there had been three draws, with two wins for Galaxy. The game had caught the imagination of the city and was dubbed *El Trafico* in a sly reminder of the city's traffic congestion problems.

Although they had yet to beat Galaxy, LAFC's confidence was high. They had lost only one home game all season and in Mexican forward Carlos Vela they had the winner of the league's Most Valuable Player award and MLS' top scorer.

Galaxy's star in the previous games had been the towering Swede, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who had scored eight goals in those five games. Vela had scored seven, so the sixth *El Trafico* became Ibrahimovic versus Vela.

In a fast-moving, goalscoring game,

Champions...Seattle Sounders celebrate

Victorious...Victor Rodriguez scores Seattle's second goal in the Final

Vela scored twice, Ibrahimovic only once, as LAFC won 5-3.

Ibrahimovic then announced that he might not be back in Los Angeles for the 2020 season, adding some sour comments about the league: "[If I stay], that will be good for MLS because the world will watch it. If I don't stay nobody will remember what MLS is."

Sour...Zlatan Ibrahimovic may not return

One foreign star definitely leaving MLS is Wayne Rooney, who is returning to England 18 months into a three-and-a-half-year contract with DC United. Both Ibrahimovic and Rooney have performed well in MLS, but their readiness to return to Europe only confirms a feeling that they, and other celebrity imports from Europe, do not take MLS seriously.

LAFC's triumph over Galaxy meant a home semi-final against Seattle, who managed to keep the ball away from Vela. Despite LAFC opening the scoring through Eduard Atuesta, Seattle hit back with two goals from Ruidiaz and one by Nicolas Lodeiro.

In spite of the rather anti-climactic final act, the 2019 MLS season was largely positive.

In his annual end-of-the-season State of the League address, commissioner Don Garber talked encouragingly about further expansion.

MLS, now with 24 teams, is aiming for 30. In 2020 it will grow to 26 teams, with the long-delayed debut of David Beckham's Inter Miami and Nashville SC. Austin are due to join in 2021, followed by St Louis and Sacramento in 2022.

There are already four candidate cities for the 30th slot, but Garber's glowing praise for the bid from Charlotte left little doubt that it would get the nod. WS

SEASON'S BEST

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Carlos Vela (LAFC)
The Mexican forward, who was with Arsenal as a teen, set a new record in scoring 34 of LAFC's 85 goals. The previous best was 31, set a year earlier by Atlanta's Josef Martinez.

COACH OF THE YEAR
Bob Bradley (LAFC)
The former boss of the national team guided LAFC to an MLS regular-season record of 72 points in his first year in charge.

Impact...Andre Shinyashiki

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Andre Shinyashiki
(Colorado Rapids)
The 22-year-old Brazilian, a product of the University of Denver, had an outstanding first campaign, scoring seven goals in 31 appearances, often as an impact player from the bench.

OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 20, 2019

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Wednesday October 23

GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund's 14-year-old Youssoufa Moukoko becomes the youngest player – by over a year – to score in the UEFA Youth League as his side lose 4-1 away to Internazionale.
SPAIN: Lionel Messi is the first player to score in 15 consecutive Champions League campaigns as Barcelona beat Slavia Prague 2-1, but he remains one short of Ryan Giggs' record of finding the net in 16 different Champions League seasons. Slavia are the 33rd side he has scored against in the competition – a record he shares with Cristiano Ronaldo and Raul.

Thursday October 24

GAMBIA: Bakery Jatta, who arrived in Germany as a refugee and has played for Hamburg since 2016, is named in the provisional squad for November's Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers. "I couldn't select him earlier because he was not yet cleared," says Gambia coach Tom Saintfiet of the 21-year-old striker who was investigated earlier this year over his identity following queries from three second-tier German sides. The authorities found no reason to take action under immigration law and the clubs withdrew their objections.

Friday October 25

ENGLAND: Leyton Orient postpone their home EFL Trophy game on November 5 against Brighton & Hove Albion under-21s by 24 hours following suggestions that it might be attended by thousands of Ajax fans. The Dutch club are playing Chelsea at Stamford Bridge in the Champions League that night but are banned from selling tickets. However, with up to 2,000 Ajax supporters having already booked travel and accommodation, supporters' groups had looked into the possibility of attending Orient's match instead.
FAROE ISLANDS: Level on points with opponents B36 on the last day of the season, KI win their first league title for 20 years with a 3-0 victory away from home.

Saturday October 26

GERMANY: Robert Lewandowski becomes the first Bundesliga player to score in his club's first nine games of the season as Bayern Munich go top of the table with a 2-1 win over Union Berlin. The 31-year-old Pole has now scored in each of his last 13 games for Bayern and has 19 goals in 14 appearances in all competitions for the club this term.
ITALY: Thiago Motta gets off to a winning start as Genoa coach as his side come from behind to win 3-1 against Brescia, with all of his team's goals coming from his three subs – which is a first for Serie A.
THAILAND: An 87th-minute equaliser on the last day of the season denies Buriram United the championship and hands a first league title to Chiangrai United, who beat Suphanburi 5-2 and finish above the holders thanks to a better head-to-head record. Starting the day two points clear, Buriram drew 1-1 at Chiangmai, whose goal was scored by Caique – who is on loan from Chiangrai.
UZBEKISTAN: Serb striker Dragan Ceran, who has scored 22 goals in 21 games for Pakhtakor on their way to the league title, gets all three as they complete the double with a 3-0 victory over AGMK in the Uzbekistan Cup Final.

Record...Lionel Messi (in yellow) opens the scoring for Barcelona against Slavia Prague in the Champions League

Sunday October 27

MONGOLIA: Going into the final game of the season level on points with Erchim, Ulaanbaatar City claim their first league title after beating Khangarid 3-0 by virtue of a better head-to-head record. Champions for the past four successive years and six times in seven seasons, Erchim had been top of the table but their advantage slipped away as they lost 2-1 to their capital-city rivals nine days earlier.
SPAIN: With a 1-0 win at home to Real Betis, newly promoted Granada go top of La Liga for the first time in 46 years.

Tuesday October 29

BULGARIA: UEFA order Bulgaria to play two games behind closed doors and they are fined €75,000 for fans' racist abuse of England

Winning start...Genoa get the better of Brescia (in white)

players in a Euro 2020 qualifier in Sofia on 15 October. The game was stopped twice and could have been abandoned, but England played on and won 6-0. The second game of this latest punishment is suspended for two years.

MEXICO: After 14 months, 41 games and six coaches, Veracruz finally win a league game, beating Puebla 1-0 in the Liga MX Apertura. Despite their victory, the team – who earlier this month protested about unpaid wages by standing still for the first three minutes of a match against Tigres – remain bottom of the table.

Wednesday October 30

ENGLAND: Championship club Derby County sack captain Richard Keogh for gross misconduct over his involvement in a car crash that led to the arrest of team-mates Mason Bennett and Tom Lawrence, who pleaded guilty to drink-driving.

FRANCE: Nantes equal a club ➤

Winner...Colin Kazim Richards (number nine) of Veracruz

Somalia

MARK GLEESON

Hopeful... Somalia fans

Underdogs miss out

But narrow World Cup exit brings new hope for minnows

In the end, they were just a few minutes shy of a huge upset, However, Somalia's ultimately unsuccessful bid to advance in the World Cup qualifiers has emboldened the war-torn country to set a more ambitious footballing course.

Somalia met Zimbabwe over two legs in September for a place in the group phase of Africa's preliminaries for the 2022 finals. And after a famous victory in neighbouring Djibouti, where they hosted the game due to a lack of infrastructure and security in their own country, they were on the verge of a massive upset in the return with five minutes left to play.

Zimbabwe took 77 minutes to equalise on aggregate but Omar Mohamed's goal in the 85th minute put Somalia back ahead on aggregate and gave them a vital away goal. But needing to score twice in the last four minutes to avoid a calamitous exit, a panicked Zimbabwe did exactly that for a 3-1 victory on the night and a 3-2 win on aggregate.

Yet for Somalia the experience was full of positives and Somali Football Federation (SFF) president Abdiqani Said says his country now hopes to host matches by next year.

Somalia's national team has not played a home game since October 1986 and a brutal civil war has left the nation devastated, with the main stadium in Mogadishu used for many years to park tanks and military vehicles of the African Union peacekeepers.

With peace largely restored and a semblance of normality returning, things are looking up. Airlines now fly into the capital and a small number of foreign players and coaches are playing for Somali clubs.

There is no actual ban on foreign teams playing in Somalia – unlike FIFA restrictions on Libya – but the Somali federation has not pressed for international games to be played in the country.

Two months ago, for the first time in 29 years, clubs from Somalia were entered in the African Champions League and African Confederation Cup but they forfeited home advantage, playing both legs of their ties away at the ground of their opponents.

According to Said, two stadia are being renovated in anticipation of hosting home games next year: one is a 10,000-seater and the other has a 15,000 capacity. The new Somali league, which started in October, is also being televised for the first time.

While these are seen as small steps in a long-term project, the exploits of the national team have caused a massive injection of enthusiasm.

With Somalia actively looking to the large diaspora, players such as 29-year-old Italian-born defender Abel Gigli, whose parents hail from Somalia, was called up for the World Cup qualifiers.

"The joy that I heard in my mother's voice after the victory over Zimbabwe and the emotion of an entire country that struck us after a historic enterprise I will never forget," says Gigli.

"In Somalia, and for Somalis around the world, they literally went crazy." WS

> "The joy that I heard in my mother's voice after the victory over Zimbabwe...I will never forget"
> Somalia defender Abel Gigli

Copa Sudamericana

TIM VICKERY

Ecuadorians triumph in Asuncion

Independiente del Valle beat Argentina's Colon in one-off Final

South America's new era of the one-off Final on a neutral ground brought a debut title for the continent's outstanding recent success story. Independiente del Valle from Ecuador beat Colon of Argentina 3-1 in Asuncion, Paraguay, to win the Copa Sudamericana, the first time a continental title has eluded the big two of Brazil and Argentina since the 2016 Copa Libertadores was won by Colombia's Atletico Nacional – who beat Independiente del Valle in the Final.

A decade ago, Independiente del Valle had never even played in Ecuador's domestic top flight and their extraordinary progress is based on a commitment to youth development.

The club exists to produce talent and sell it on. They have graduates in every Ecuadorian first division club and, increasingly, all over the planet. The Ecuador under-20 side that won this year's South American championship – and came third in the World Cup – was based on players from the club, all of whom have since been sold. So, a new generation is promoted,

Stoppage... Brazilian referee Raphael Claus takes control

Champions...Cristian Dajome lifts the trophy

Splash...Colon's Federico Lertora slides through the water

some experienced names are brought in to add ballast, and the team marches on.

Nothing seems to faze them. Asuncion was hardly a neutral venue, with Colon having almost 40,000 travelling fans while Independiente del Valle had a little over 500. Then there was the weather. Right after the kick-off, fierce afternoon sunshine gave way to a torrential downpour and the pitch became unplayable. The game was halted for almost an hour, but Independiente scored either side of the stoppage, with a header from centre-back Luis Fernando Leon and a shot from rampaging left-winger John Jairo Sanchez.

Colon star Luis Rodriguez had a penalty saved – not trusting the pitch, he went with power rather than his usual subtlety – and the game seemed to be petering out until, from nowhere Colon scrambled an 89th-minute goal from centre-back Emanuel Olivera following a corner. It set up some late drama – bearing out, perhaps, the hope that the one-off Final would produce a better spectacle than the old home-and-away format.

The Argentinian fans roared their team forward in search of an equaliser, but the Ecuadorians wrapped it up with a typically well-constructed counter-attack, rounded off by a tap-in from right-winger Cristian Dajome.

Under Spanish coach Miguel Angel Ramirez, Independiente del Valle were composed and collective, defending in groups, passing in clusters and looking to free their rapid wingers.

A decade ago, Independiente del Valle had never even played in Ecuador's top flight

It was much the same on the big day as it was through the course of the campaign. In the semi-finals they beat Brazil's Corinthians, who later confessed they were given a football lesson. In the previous round they overcame Independiente of Argentina, another traditional powerhouse, and they also beat Caracas of Venezuela, thrashed Chile's Universidad Catolica and opened their campaign with a triumph over Colon's local rivals Union Santa Fe.

Independiente del Valle played some fine football in a competition not always known for a profusion of quality but one that fulfils the function of giving many clubs their first taste of continental action. WS

➤ record with an 8-0 thrashing of Paris FC in the Coupe de la Ligue round of 32.

Thursday October 31

NORTHERN IRELAND: The Irish FA rejects a proposal to join an All-Ireland league. It believes that "the best interests of our member clubs and football in Northern Ireland are better served by remaining with the club-led model established in 2013 via the Northern Ireland Football League" and points to a "balanced league which has seen a substantial increase in attendances, awareness and television coverage". The IFA also queries a lack of "specificity or guarantees", particularly as "UEFA competition places, prize monies and youth solidarity funding are important to our clubs and we do not wish to put these in question".

Friday November 1

FRANCE: Bottom-of-the-table Dijon, who only survived in Ligue 1 last term by winning a relegation play-off, come from behind to beat reigning champions and league leaders Paris Saint-Germain 2-1.

Sunday November 3

GERMANY: Bayern Munich part company with coach Niko Kovac following a 5-1 defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt the previous day.

TOGO: National under-20 coach Ayivi Ekuevi dies at the age of 60 following an illness. At club level he led AS Togo Port to the league title in 2017 and was in charge when they became the first Togolese club to reach the group stage of the African Champions League.

Monday November 4

AFC CUP: Al Ahed are the first team from Lebanon to win Asia's secondary club competition, beating April 25 SC of North Korea in a Final that was moved from Pyongyang to Shanghai and eventually played in Kuala Lumpur. Despite having goalkeeper An Tae-song sent off in the 26th minute, the North Koreans hold out until 16 minutes from the end, when Issah Yakubu heads home the only goal of the game.

Tuesday November 5

CHILE: South American football's governing body CONMEBOL announces the Copa Libertadores Final between River Plate and Flamengo on November 23 has been moved from Santiago to Lima in Peru due to ongoing political demonstrations in the Chilean capital. Earlier in the day Chile cancel an international friendly at home to Bolivia that was scheduled to be played on Friday.

SPAIN: Barcelona fail to score at home for the first time in 46 games in all competitions as they are held to a 0-0 draw in the Champions League by Slavia Prague. They did, however, extend their unbeaten home run in the competition to a record 34 games.

TUNISIA: An appeal for financial help by Club Africain sees their supporters donate more than $450,000 over a 24-hour period. The country's second-oldest club, who have been deducted six points, were sanctioned over unpaid salaries to former players and the Tunisian Football Federation puts the club's total debt at almost $6m.

Wednesday November 6

BRAZIL: Bragantino from Sao Paulo, who will be known as Red Bull Bragantino as of next season, will play in the top flight under their new name after securing promotion from Serie B with a 3-1 victory over Guarani. The club received an investment of nearly $15m from the energy-drink maker this year, a figure that will double for 2020.

ITALY: Cristiano Ronaldo equals Paolo Maldini with 174 UEFA club competition appearances as Juventus beat Lokomotiv Moscow 2-1. He is now second only to Iker Casillas, who played 188 games.

SPAIN: Eighteen-year-old Rodrygo is the second-youngest player – after Raul – to score a Champions League hat-trick as Real Madrid beat Galatasaray 6-0. Karim Benzema also scores and equals Lionel Messi's record of scoring in a 15th consecutive campaign.

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Bayern Munich, Juventus and Paris Saint-Germain are the first three teams to qualify for the knockout stage of the tournament.

Thursday November 7

EUROPA LEAGUE: Basle, Celtic, Espanyol, Manchester United and Sevilla all make it through to the knockout stage.

Saturday November 9

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Peru international Andre Carrillo gets the only goal of the game as Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia beat Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds in their home leg of the Final in Riyadh.

GERMANY: Bayern Munich thrash Borussia Dortmund in *Der Klassiker*, with Robert Lewandowski scoring ➤

Vietnam

JOHN DUERDEN

Park's World Cup vision

South Korean coach gives Vietnamese hope

If Vietnam become the second Southeast Asian nation to reach the World Cup finals – Indonesia in the guise of Dutch East Indies were the first in 1938 – then it is hard to imagine just what rewards will be showered upon coach Park Hang-seo.

After beating the United Arab Emirates and a 0-0 draw with Thailand, Park's side were two points clear at the top of their qualification group with five games down and three to go. The team is on course to reach the final stage for the first time and be one of the last 12 competing for Asia's four automatic spots in Qatar.

Just to get close would get red-shirted millions out on the streets for mass viewing parties in Hanoi in the north all the way down to Ho Chi Minh in the south. If it all sounds a little like South Korea in the summer of 2002 then there is a common element here...

Park was a well-known member of Guus Hiddink's World Cup staff 17 years ago as South Korea reached the last four. He then went on to have a middling coaching career of his own in Korea's K-League before taking the Vietnam job in 2017.

Vietnam have long been known for producing technically gifted players and have invested in youth facilities and development, but they usually fall short even in regional competition, never mind the continent as a whole.

An old-fashioned Korean coach who loves fitness, hard work and discipline, Park has instilled those values in a young and talented team – and it has become a winning formula. Vietnam have become Southeast Asia's top side, overtaking Thailand and breaking into Asia's top 10.

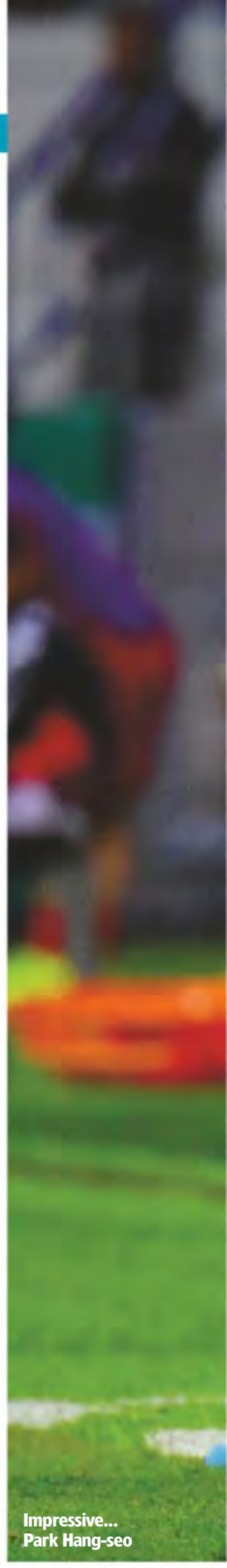
The first signs of the "Park Syndrome" that has gripped a nation of 96 million were seen in January 2018 at the AFC Under-23 Championship. An easy-on-the-eye team with a soft underbelly, Vietnam showed a new side. They were fitter, quicker and more confident.

Park's team entered the tournament in the bottom pot of seeds but beat Australia in the group stage and only lost to South Korea by a late goal. Beating a talented Iraq on penalties had fans at home lining the streets and partying. Then in the semi-finals they beat Qatar, a team that contained a number of players who would go on to win the Asian Cup a year later. In the Final, with snow falling heavily in the Chinese city of Changzhou, there was a narrow 2-1 loss after extra time to Uzbekistan.

Nguyen Quang Hai scored his fifth goal of the tournament in that game, earning himself hero status in Vietnam and making him a top prospect in a region of over 600 million. The attacking midfielder has an eye for a pass, takes a good free-kick and has an awareness that belies his 22 years. Supported by such as Phan Van Duc, Nguyen Cong Phuong, Vu Van Thanh and Luong Xuan Truong, Vietnam have a young, talented side that has grown up together.

That was confirmed at the end of 2018 when millions came out on the streets again as Vietnam won Southeast Asia's biennial regional bash, the AFF Championship, 10 years after they had won it for the

Chase...UAE's Jassem Yaqoub (right) tries to get away from Nguyen Quang Hai of Vietnam



Impressive... Park Hang-seo

➤ twice to continue his run of scoring in all 15 of Bayern's European and Bundesliga games this season.

SPAIN: Lionel Messi's hat-trick in Barcelona's 4-1 victory over Celta Vigo is his 34th in La Liga, equalling Cristiano Ronaldo's record.

Sunday November 10

AUSTRIA: Erling Haland scores his fifth hat-trick of the season as Red Bull Salzburg beat Wolfsberger 3-0 and he now has 27 goals in 18 club appearances this season.

ENGLAND: Liverpool beat reigning champions Manchester City 3-1 at Anfield to open an eight-point lead over Leicester City and Chelsea at the top of the Premier League.

USA: Seattle Sounders claim their second MLS Cup in four years with a 3-1 victory over Toronto.

Monday November 11

BOSNIA: Police arrest 12 people, including referees and officials, in an investigation into match fixing in the country's second division. Suspects are facing charges of organised crime, bribery and abuse of position, with the suspects implicated in "demanding and receiving gifts and other benefits" to fix the outcome of games during the 2018-19 season.

Top...Liverpool's Georginio Wijnaldum

ENGLAND: Raheem Sterling is dropped for Thursday's Euro 2020 qualifier against Montenegro after he clashes with team-mate Joe Gomez at England's St George's Park training camp.

SPAIN: Barcelona will face Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid take on Valencia in the semi-finals of the Spanish Super Cup, to be staged in Saudi Arabia from January 8 to 12.

Wednesday November 13

SWEDEN: Ex-Nigeria midfielder Dickson Etuhu is found guilty of

Old boss...Park worked with Guus Hiddink (left) in South Korea

first time. Then, in January, Vietnam demonstrated that it could compete at senior level in a continental-wide competition, reaching the last eight of the Asian Cup, held in the UAE, before losing 1-0 to Japan.

Next up was the start of qualification for the 2022 World Cup, in which they took 10 points from their first four games: a draw in Thailand and then wins over Indonesia, Malaysia and UAE.

For Vietnam to get to the next stage would be a huge statement of intent, but there are issues.

The local league needs to improve and the level of politics in the domestic game is too high, while average attendances of around 7,000 are too low. The standards of professionalism at a number of clubs could also do with improving.

Fans are desperate to see players such as Quang Hai head to Europe, but local clubs are hard to deal with

While Vietnamese fans are desperate to see players such as Quang Hai head to Europe, many of the local clubs are hard to deal with.

National coach Park signed a new contract in November that gave him a major pay rise from the $20,000 or so he was receiving every month. But, to be fair, the 60-year-old doesn't really need the money as he fronts an increasing number of advertising campaigns, especially for anything that is vaguely related to Korea.

Park has been touted as a future boss of South Korea but, with the way things are going in Vietnam, if he wants to lead a team at the next World Cup there may not be any need to go home. WS

match fixing as the Court of Appeals in Stockholm rules he and one other tried to influence AIK keeper Kyriakos Stamatopoulos to fix a match in 2017.

Thursday November 14

EURO 2020: Czech Republic, England, France and Turkey all book their place in the finals.

Friday November 15

ARGENTINA: Lionel Messi scores the only goal of the game as Argentina beat Brazil in a friendly.
EURO 2020: Finland reach the finals of a major tournament for the first time, where they will be joined by Sweden.

Through...Portugal are off to the Euro finals

Saturday November 16

EURO 2020: Germany and Holland qualify from Group C and go through to the finals, along with Austria and Croatia.

Sunday November 17

EURO 2020: Portugal qualify for the finals as Group B runners-up.
UNDER-17 WORLD CUP: Hosts Brazil beat Mexico 2-1 in the Final.

Monday November 18

EURO 2020: Switzerland finish top ➤

➤ of Group D and go through to the finals, with runners-up Denmark.
HOLLAND: Den Bosch apologise to Excelsior winger Ahmad Mendes Moreira for saying he mistook "crow sounds" for racist noises during Sunday's second-tier game. The referee took the players off after half an hour following the abuse from a section of the home fans but the host club had initially argued that opposition players near the De Viert stand inside their De Vliert stadium were regularly treated to a "crow concert" by supporters. "That reaction was a blunder for which the club apologises to everyone, in particular to Excelsior player Ahmad Mendes Moreira," read a club statement.
MOROCCO: Second-tier side TAS Casablanca beat Hassania Agadir 2-1 in the Moroccan Cup Final to collect their first ever silverware and book a place in the preliminary round of next season's CAF Confederation Cup.

Tuesday November 19

EURO 2020: Wales are the 20th and final team to secure automatic qualification for next summer's tournament, where they will be joined by four play-off winners.
ITALY: Gaetano Micciche resigns as the president of Serie A following an investigation into his election in March last year, when he was chosen unanimously by the Italian league's 20 clubs.
MYANMAR: A 1-0 victory at home to Mongolia sees Myanmar record back-to-back wins in World Cup qualifying games for the first time in their history.
SPAIN: Former Malaga, Marseille and Aris striker Sergio Contreras is arrested by police in southern Spain on suspicion of being "in charge" of a drugs ring.

Wednesday November 20

AUSTRIA: Gerhard Struber leaves Wolfsberger, who are third in the Austrian Bundesliga, to manage Barnsley, who are bottom of the English Championship.
ENGLAND: Less than 12 hours after the sacking of Mauricio Pochettino, Tottenham Hotspur appoint Jose Mourinho, with chairman Daniel Levy saying: "In Jose we have one of the most successful managers in football. He has a wealth of experience, can inspire teams and is a great tactician. He has won honours at every club he has coached. We believe he will bring energy and belief to the dressing room." WS

Under-17 World Cup

SAMINDRA KUNTI

Historic first for Brazil

Hosts beat Mexico to win world title

In an historic first, Brazil won a world title on home soil. They defeated Mexico, the surprise package of the 2019 Under-17 World Cup, 2-1 in a dramatic decider with a last-gap winner from substitute Lazaro. Throughout the tournament the Brazilians exploited their home advantage, but their victory was a testament to a pragmatic and reactive style of play that didn't match the progressive football of Europe's top teams.

In the Final, Mexico were inching closer towards a third world title courtesy of Bryan Gonzalez's header before Brazil completed a heart-in-mouth comeback to clinch a fourth under-17 world crown. Striker Kaio Jorge equalised from the penalty spot after a soft call from the referee in the 84th minute, then an elegant first-time finish from Lazaro in injury time handed Brazil a first gold medal since 2003.

In the round of 16 Brazil had come from behind to beat Chile 3-2 and in the last four they trailed 2-0 to France after 13 minutes, only to progress after a second-half rearguard action. They then upheld their sense for late drama against the Mexicans, whose rigid organisation and lethal counter-attacking long frustrated coach Guilherme Dalla Dea's side. However, Brazil's urgency in the final 10 minutes of the match proved too much for their opponents.

The feat of winning the tournament undefeated was all the more remarkable as Brazil hadn't even qualified for the tournament. At the start of 2019 they failed to finish in the top four of the South American Under-17s, but when FIFA stripped Peru of the hosting rights over a lack of adequate preparations the tournament shifted to Brazil.

Brazil were dealt a major blow before the finals began when Flamengo refused to release attacker Reinier. Against Chile, the team's talisman, Talles Magno of Vasco da Gama, sustained a muscular injury that ended his participation.

Injury time...Lazaro scores Brazil's late winner in the Final

Skipper...Henri lifts the trophy

Brazil, like Mexico, had not been expected to go all the way. In the group stage, the Mexicans suffered a 2-1 defeat against Italy, but they maintained a tight organisation at the back and lurked on the counter-attack, which was the template for success in the semi-finals against Holland.

European champions Holland had manufactured a minor miracle after defeats at the hands of Asian champions Japan and debutants Senegal in the first phase and only sneaked into the knockout round with a 4-0 win over USA, who exited bottom of group D with just a single point. Against the Americans, the Dutch shook off their complacency and striker Sontje Hansen's brace and assist were the catalyst for a convincing victory. Hansen also forced a 78th-minute penalty which Kenneth Taylor failed to convert.

The Ajax striker won the golden boot with six goals, but it wasn't enough to guide Holland to a first under-17 world Final. Coach Peter Van der Veen tweaked his team in the knockout stage, moving Hansen higher up the pitch and introducing winger Jayden Braaf. Youri Regeer was the final piece in the jigsaw, screening the defence.

Nigeria, Senegal and Angola were eliminated in the

round of 16 to end the African challenge. Cameroon had finished bottom of group E with Spain, Argentina and Tajikistan. "The African teams have progressed well," said Senegal coach Malick Daf. "But we are not yet at the top level."

The Dutch met their match in Mexico, but felt aggrieved about the referee's free-kick decision that led to Mexico's equaliser. The French had similar grievances in their shock semi-final defeat by Brazil, but in truth had only themselves to blame by sitting on their 2-0 lead and inviting Brazilian pressure.

"I heard that the referee made the wrong choices at some point in the other semi-final and that happened to us also," said Hansen. "That is unfortunate."

With their physicality, pace on the wings and the midfield artistry of Adil Aouchiche, France dazzled, scoring 19 goals and wiping out Spain 6-1 in the quarter-finals. The two-footed Aouchiche's vision and seven assists formed the heartbeat of a modern team with aggressive marking and quick ball retention. France had the best collective and individual talents, but even if Aouchiche repeated his standout performance from the European Championship, where he had been deployed as a striker, it didn't suffice in a tournament dominated by pragmatism.

The French claimed the bronze medal, scored 22 goals in seven matches, possessed arguably the player of the tournament, but were left to ponder how they

Six...Nathanael Mbuku (left) was among the scorers as France thrashed Spain

failed to get past a limited Brazilian team in the semi-finals in a match that finally caught the public's imagination. Until then, the three host cities of Brasilia, Goiana and Cariacica had struggled to draw crowds.

"Holland and France played the best football," said Aouchiche who walked off in tears after the Brazil defeat. "Brazil and Mexico showed great mental strength, but in terms of quality France and Holland were superior."

It was left to the hosts and Lazaro to rally again in the Final. Yet, the gritty Brazilians never inspired – with the exception of winger Veron. At 1.89m and 1.90m, central defensive pairing Henri and Luan Patrick were the two tallest outfield players in the starting XI, but they were tall and slow, which prevented the team from playing a high line – an affliction other Brazilian youth sides have suffered from in the past – and in turn compromised the side's entire dynamic.

Ronaldinho is the only Brazilian player to have won both the Under-17 World Cup, in 1997, and the senior equivalent, in 2002. In all, just eight players from Brazil's four under-17 world title-winning sides have gone on to wear the colours of the senior team.

Dalla Dea claimed that this team is "a great generation", even if few will succeed in the future. At the very least, a focus on player development instead of results would have eased the pathway forward for the new champions. WS

Club football

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Final

Nov 9 - Asuncion, Paraguay
Independiente del Valle (Ecu) 3 (Leon 25, Sanchez 42, Dajome 90+6)
Colon (Arg) 1 (Olivera 89)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Claus (Bra)
Independiente del Valle: Pinos - Landazuri, Leon, Schunke, Segovia, Pellerano, Dajome, Franco, Mera (Garces 80), Sanchez (Cabeza 75), Torres (Corozo 86).
Colon: Burian - Vigo (Ortega 66), Ortiz, Olivera, Escobar (Esparza 70), Bernardi (Chancalay 77), Zuqui, Lertora, Estigarribia, Morelo, Rodriguez.

LIBERTADORES CUP

Semi-finals

1st legs

Oct1
River Plate (Arg) 2 (Borre pen 7, Fernandez 70)
Boca Juniors (Arg) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 62,273. **Ref:** Claus (Bra)
Sent off: Capaldo (BocaJuniors) 90+7

Oct 2
Gremio (Bra) 1 (Pepe 88)
Flamengo (Bra) 1 (Bruno Henrique 69)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,013. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)

2nd legs

Oct 22
Boca Juniors 1 (Hurtado 80)
River Plate 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 48,946. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)
River Plate 2-1 on agg

Oct 23
Flamengo 5 (Bruno Henrique 43, Gabriel Barbosa 46, pen 56, Mari 67, Rodrigo Caio 71)
Gremio 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 69,265. **Ref:** Loustau (Arg)
Flamengo 6-1 on agg

ASIA

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-finals

1st legs

Oct1
Al Sadd (Qat) 1 (Gomis og 14)
Al Hilal (Sau) 4 (Gomis 33, 60, Al Bulaihi 45, Al Shalhoub 67)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 13,753. **Ref:** Al Kaf (Oma)

Oct 2
Urawa Red Diamonds (Jap) 2 (Fabricio 19, Sekine 75)
Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,068. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)

2nd legs

Oct 22
Al Hilal 2 (S Al Dawsari 13, Gomis 25)
Al Sadd 4 (Afif pen 17, Nam 19, Al Haidos 20, Khoukhi 90+3)
HT: 2-3. **Att:** 20,743. **Ref:** Bin Jahari (Sin)
Al Hilal 6-5 on agg

Oct 23
Guangzhou Evergrande 0
Urawa Red Diamonds 1 (Koroki 50)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 39,999. **Ref:** Faghani (Irn)
Urawa Red Diamonds 3-0 on agg

AFC CUP

ASEAN zone

Semi-finals

1st legs - Jun18/19; 2nd legs - Jun 25/26
Binh Duong (Vie) v PSM (Ins) 1-0, 1-2
(agg 2-2, Binh Duong on away goals)
Ceres-Negros (Phi) v Ha Noi (Vie) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)

Final

1st leg - Jul 31; 2nd leg - Aug 7
Binh Duong v Ha Noi 0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
● *Ha Noi qualified for the Inter-zone play-offs*

West Asia zone

Semi-finals

1st legs - Jun17/18; 2nd legs - Jun 24/25
Al Jaish (Syr) v Al Jazeera (Jor) 3-0, 0-4 (agg 3-4)
Al Wehdat (Jor) v Al Ahed (Leb) 0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1)

Final

1st leg - Sep 24; 2nd leg - Oct1
Al Jazeera v Al Ahed 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
● *Al Ahed qualified for the AFC Cup Final*

Inter-zone play-offs

Semi-finals

1st legs - Aug 20/21; 2nd legs - Aug 27/28
Abahani D (Ban) v April 25 (NKo) 4-3, 0-2 (agg 4-5)
Ha Noi v Altyn Asyr (Tkm) 3-2, 2-2 (agg 5-4)

Final

1st leg - Sep 25; 2nd leg - Oct 2
Ha Noi v April 25 2-2, 0-0
(agg 2-2, April 25 on away goals)
● *April 25 qualified for the AFC Cup Final*

Final

Nov 4 - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
April 25 0
Al Ahed 1 (Yakubu 74)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Perera (Sri)
April 25: An Tae-song - Kwon Chung-hyok, An Song-il/1992, Pak Jin-myong, Pak Song-rok, Choe Chol-su (Sin Tae-song 28), Won Song, O Hyok-chol, Son Phyong-il, Rim Chol-min (Kim Yu-song 40; An Song-il/1996 88), An Il-bom. *Sent off: An Tae-song 26.*
Al Ahed: M Khalil - Zein, Mansour, Al Salih, Dakik, Yakubu, Faour, Ataya (El Ali 80), Haidar, Zreik, Akaichi (Monzer 89).

EAST TIMOR

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lalenok Utd (C)	14	9	3	2	35	15	30
Boavista	14	7	4	3	28	22	25
Ponta Leste	14	7	2	5	22	18	23
Karketu	14	6	2	6	24	27	20
SL Benfica	14	5	4	5	30	27	19
Assalam	14	5	4	5	26	29	19
Academica (R)	14	2	4	8	21	27	10
At Ultramar (R)	14	3	1	10	20	41	10

PHILIPPINES

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ceres-Neg's (C)	24	22	2	0	99	12	68
Kaya-Iloilo	24	18	2	4	60	16	56
Stallion Laguna	24	11	6	7	54	25	39
Green Archers	24	10	5	9	42	37	35
Mendiola 1991	24	6	5	13	34	54	23
Phil Air Force	24	3	2	19	18	86	11
Global Makati	24	1	4	19	15	92	7

SINGAPORE

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Br'i DPMM (C)	24	15	5	4	51	25	50
Tampines Rvrs	24	12	8	4	52	29	44
Hougang Utd	24	13	4	7	58	45	43
Albirex Niigata	24	12	5	7	36	25	41
Geylang Intl	24	10	3	11	41	48	33
Home United	24	9	3	12	34	46	30
Warriors	24	6	5	13	40	56	23
Young Lions	24	6	4	14	21	38	22
Balestier K'sa	24	4	5	15	37	58	17

THAILAND

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chiangrai U (C)	30	16	10	4	53	28	58
Buriram Utd	30	16	10	4	51	25	58
Port	30	15	8	7	55	36	53
Bangkok Utd	30	13	11	6	55	32	50
Muangthong	30	14	4	12	45	42	46
Samut Prakan	30	12	7	11	44	50	43
Chonburi	30	11	7	12	43	45	40
Ratchaburi	30	10	8	12	48	48	38
Prachuap	30	9	10	11	32	44	37
Trat	30	9	8	13	47	47	35
PTT Ray'g (R)[1]	30	9	8	13	33	46	35
Sukhothai	30	6	16	8	37	37	34
Nakhon R'sima	30	9	7	14	45	51	34
Suphanburi	30	7	11	12	29	44	32
Chainat H (R)	30	8	6	16	31	50	30
Chiangmai (R)	30	7	7	16	39	62	28

[1] *Withdrew from league at end of season*

VIETNAM

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ha Noi (C)	26	15	8	3	60	30	53
Ho Chi Minh C	26	14	6	6	41	29	48
T Quang Ninh	26	10	9	7	41	33	39
Binh Duong	26	10	6	10	32	32	36
Sai Gon	26	10	6	10	37	40	36
Viettel	26	11	3	12	33	40	36
Song Lam NA	26	8	11	7	32	26	35
Hoang Anh GL	26	10	5	11	45	46	35
Quang Nam	26	8	10	8	43	38	34
Da Nang	26	9	6	11	38	38	33
Nam Dinh	26	8	7	11	32	41	31
Hai Phong	26	8	6	12	33	44	30
Thanh Hoa[1]	26	6	8	12	36	52	26
Sanna KH (R)	26	6	7	13	31	45	25

[1] *Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

EUROPE

ESTONIA

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flora (C)	36	29	3	4	110	21	90
FCI	36	24	6	6	98	32	78
Kalju	36	22	11	3	79	34	77
Paide	36	23	5	8	78	30	74
Tammeka	36	14	7	15	57	62	49
Trans	36	13	9	14	57	49	48
Tulevik	36	7	7	22	35	75	28
Kalev	36	6	6	24	29	89	24
Kuressaare[1]	36	6	5	25	24	87	23
Maardu (R)	36	4	5	27	30	118	17

[1] *Enter rel/prom play-off*

FAROE ISLANDS

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
KI (C)	27	21	3	3	62	19	66
B36	27	20	3	4	53	23	63
NSI	27	18	3	6	65	31	57
HB	27	15	6	6	62	28	51
Vikingur	27	16	3	8	51	35	51
Skala	27	12	1	14	38	32	37
AB	27	6	3	18	32	66	21
TB	27	5	4	18	20	57	19
EB/Streymur	27	5	3	19	25	63	18
IF	27	1	3	23	27	81	6

FINLAND

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

2019 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
KuPS (C)	27	15	8	4	46	24	53
Inter	27	15	3	9	42	29	48
Honka	27	14	5	8	41	29	47
Ilves	27	13	8	6	34	25	47
HJK	27	9	10	8	33	29	37
Mariehamn	27	9	5	13	31	34	32

2019 – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
HIFK	27	10	9	8	37	34	39
Lahti	27	9	9	9	29	36	36
SJK	27	7	9	11	18	29	30
RoPS	27	8	6	13	23	35	30
KPV (R)[1]	27	7	4	16	32	47	25
VPS (R)	27	3	10	14	30	45	19

[1] *Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off*

KAZAKHSTAN

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Astana (C)	33	22	3	8	67	28	69
Kairat	33	22	2	9	65	32	68
Ordabasy	33	19	8	6	52	24	65
Tobol	33	19	6	8	45	27	63
Zhetysu	33	16	8	9	45	25	56
Kaysar	33	12	6	15	37	43	42
Okzhetpes	33	11	7	15	44	49	40
Irtysh	33	11	4	18	30	45	37
Shakhter	33	9	8	16	40	47	35
Taraz[1]	33	7	8	18	28	60	29
Atyrau (R)	33	6	8	19	25	58	26
Aktobe[2] (R)	33	7	6	20	35	75	15

[1] *Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*
[2] *12pts deducted for failing to pay money owed to 2 former players*

LATVIA

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Riga FC (C)	32	20	6	6	59	21	66
RFS	32	17	8	7	55	32	59
Ventspils	32	12	11	9	47	43	47
Valmiera	32	12	10	10	37	34	46
Spartaks	32	13	5	14	49	64	44
Liepaja	32	11	6	15	41	43	39
Jelgava	32	9	11	12	34	37	38
Daugavpils	32	8	7	17	27	50	31
Metta[1]	32	6	8	18	35	60	26

[1] *Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

MOLDOVA

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheriff (C)	28	22	4	2	60	9	70
Sf Gheorghe	28	16	5	7	40	28	53
Petrocub	28	14	8	6	34	21	50
Dinamo-Auto	28	12	5	11	38	37	41
Milsami	28	10	9	9	30	28	39
Speranta	28	8	11	9	29	34	35
Zimbru	28	3	7	18	16	43	16
Codru[1]	28	0	5	23	8	55	5

[1] *Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dundalk (C)	36	27	5	4	73	18	86
Shamrock R	36	23	6	7	62	21	75
Bohemians	36	17	9	10	47	28	60
Derry City	36	15	12	9	56	34	57
St Patrick's A	36	14	10	12	29	35	52
Waterford	36	12	7	17	46	53	43
Sligo Rovers	36	10	12	14	38	47	42
Cork City	36	9	10	17	29	49	37
Finn Harps[1]	36	7	7	22	26	64	28
UCD (R)	36	5	4	27	25	82	19

[1] *Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

SWEDEN

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Djurgarden (C)	30	20	6	4	53	19	66
Malmo	30	19	8	3	56	16	65
Hammarby	30	20	5	5	75	38	65
AIK	30	19	5	6	47	24	62
Norrkoping	30	16	9	5	54	26	57
Hacken	30	14	7	9	44	29	49
IFK Goth'burg	30	13	9	8	46	31	48
Elfsborg	30	11	10	9	44	45	43
Orebro	30	9	6	15	40	56	33
Helsingborg	30	8	6	16	29	49	30
Sirius	30	8	5	17	34	51	29
Ostersund	30	5	10	15	27	52	25
Falkenberg	30	6	7	17	25	62	25
Kalmar[1]	30	4	11	15	22	47	23
Sundsvall (R)	30	4	8	18	31	50	20
Eskilstuna (R)	30	4	8	18	23	55	20

[1] *Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

CONCACAF

CONCACAF LEAGUE

Semi-finals

1st legs - Oct 24; 2nd legs - Oct 31
Alianza (ESv) v Motagua (Hnd) 1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)
Olimpia (Hnd) v Saprissa (CR) 2-0, 1-4 (agg 3-4)

CANADA

2019 Premier League Final

1st leg - Oct 26; 2nd leg - Nov 2
Forge v Cavalry 1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)

UNITED STATES

2019 – REGULAR: EASTERN CONFERENCE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New York C (Q)	34	18	10	6	63	42	64
Atlanta U (Q)	34	18	4	12	58	43	58
Philad'phia (Q)	34	16	7	11	58	50	55
Toronto (Q)	34	13	11	10	57	52	50
DC United (Q)	34	13	11	10	42	38	50
NY RB (Q)	34	14	6	14	53	51	48
N England (Q)	34	11	12	11	50	57	45
Chicago Fire	34	10	12	12	55	47	42
Montreal I	34	12	5	17	47	60	41
Columbus C	34	10	8	16	39	47	38
Orlando City	34	9	10	15	44	52	37
Cincinnati	34	6	6	22	31	75	24

2019 – REGULAR: WESTERN CONFERENCE – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LA FC (Q)	34	21	9	4	85	37	72
Seattle S (Q)	34	16	8	10	52	49	56
R Salt Lake (Q)	34	16	5	13	46	41	53
Minnesota U (Q)	34	15	8	11	52	43	53
LA Galaxy (Q)	34	16	3	15	58	59	51
Portland T (Q)	34	14	7	13	52	49	49
Dallas (Q)	34	13	9	12	54	46	48
San Jose E	34	13	5	16	52	55	44
Colorado R	34	12	6	16	58	63	42
Houston D	34	12	4	18	49	59	40
S Kansas C	34	10	8	16	49	67	38
Vancouver W	34	8	10	16	37	59	34

● *The top 7 in both conferences qualified for the play-offs, the teams that topped the tables going directly into the quarter-finals*

Play-offs 1st round

Oct 19: Atlanta United 1 New England Revolution 0; Real Salt Lake 2 Portland Timbers 1; Seattle Sounders 4 Dallas 3 (aet); Toronto 5 DC United 1 (aet).
Oct 20: Minnesota United 1 LA Galaxy 2; Philadelphia Union 4 New York Red Bulls 3 (aet).

Quarter-finals

Oct 23: New York City 1 Toronto 2; Seattle Sounders 2 Real Salt Lake 0.
Oct 24: Atlanta United 2 Philadelphia Union 0; Los Angeles FC 5 LA Galaxy 3.

Semi-finals

Oct 29: Los Angeles FC 1 Seattle Sounders 3.
Oct 30: Atlanta United 1 Toronto 2.

2019 Championship Final (MLS Cup)

Nov 10: Seattle Sounders 3 Toronto 1.

AFRICA

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st round

1st legs - Sep14/15; 2nd legs - Sep 27-Oct 24
Al Nasr (Lby) v Raja Casablanca (Mor) 1-3, 1-1 (agg 2-4); Asante Kotoko (Gha) v Etoile Sahel (Tun) 2-0, 0-3 (agg 2-3); ASC Kara (Tog) v AS Vita (DRC) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1); Cano Sport (EqG) v Al Ahly (Egy) 0-2, 0-4 (agg 0-6); Cote d'Or (Sey) v Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 0-5, 1-11 (agg 1-16); Elect Sport (Chd) v Esperance Tunis (Tun) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3); Enyimba (Nga) v Al Hilal (Sud) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1); FC Platinum (Zim) v Uniao Songo (Moz) 1-0, 4-2 (agg 5-2); Fosa Juniors (Mad) v TP Mazembe (DRC) 0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3); Generation Foot (Sen) v Zamalek (Egy) 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2, Zamalek on away goals); Green Eagles (Zam) v Primeiro Agosto (Ang) 1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2, Primeiro Agosto on away goals); JS Kabylie (Alg) v Horoya (Gui) 2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2, JS Kabylie 5-3 on pens); Nouadhibou (Mra) v Wydad Casablanca (Mor) 0-2, 1-4 (agg 1-6); Petro Atletico (Ang) v KCCA (Uga) 0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1, Petro Atletico on away goals); USM Alger (Alg) v Gor Mahia (Ken) 4-1, 2-0 (agg 6-1); Young Africans (Tan) v Zesco United (Zam) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
● *Winning teams have qualified for the group stage; losing teams entered Confederation Cup*

CONFEDERATION CUP

Play-off round

(the losing teams from the Champions League 1st round entered at this stage)
1st legs - Oct 27/30; 2nd legs - Nov 3/5
Al Nasr (Lby) v Proline (Uga) 2-2, 2-0 (agg 4-2); Asante Kotoko (Gha) v San Pedro (IvC) 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2); ASC Kara (Tog) v Enugu Rangers (Nga) 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2, Enugu Rangers on away goals); Cano Sport (EqG) v Zanaco (Zam) 1-3, 1-5 (agg 2-8); Cote d'Or (Sey) v Al Masry (Egy) 0-4, 0-2 (agg 0-6); Elect Sport (Chd) v Djoliba (Mli) 0-1, 0-4 (agg 0-5); Enyimba (Nga) v TS Galaxy (SAf) 2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1); Fosa Juniors (Mad) v RS Berkane (Mor) 2-0, 0-5 (agg 2-5); Generation Foot (Sen) v ESAE (Ben) 0-1, 1-0 (agg 1-1, ESAE 4-3 on pens); Gor Mahia (Ken) v DC Motema Pembe (DRC) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3); Green Eagles (Zam) v Hassania Agadir (Mor) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3); Horoya (Gui) v Bandari (Ken) 4-2, 1-0 (agg 5-2); KCCA (Uga) v Paradou AC (Alg) 0-0, 1-4 (agg 1-4); Nouadhibou (Mra) v Triangle United (Zim) 2-0, 2-3 (agg 4-3); Uniao Songo (Moz) v Bidvest Wits (SAf) 1-2, 0-6 (agg 1-8); Young Africans (Tan) v Pyramids (Egy) 1-2, 0-3 (agg 1-5)
● *Winning teams have qualified for group stage*

Internationals

FRIENDLIES

Thursday, November 7

Nov 7 - Borg El Arab
Egypt 1 (H Fathy 85)
Liberia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,000. Ref: Ghandour (Egy)
Sent off: Jackson (Liberia) 86

Nov 7 - Mandalay
Myanmar 3 (Suan Lam Mang 3, David Htan 45+1, Hlaing Bo Bo 69)
Nepal 0
HT: 2-0

Nov 7 - Managua
Nicaragua 0
Cuba 0
Ref: Sandoval (Nic)

Saturday, November 9

Nov 9 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 1 (Safawi 72)
Tajikistan 0
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Yatimov (Tajikistan) 46

Nov 9 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 3 (Sergeev 11, Khamdanov 53, Iskanderov 80)
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Musabekov 30)
HT: 1-1

Sunday, November 10

Nov10 - Managua
Nicaragua 0
Cuba 1 (Reyes 18)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Lezama (Nic)

Nov10 - Couva
Trinidad & Tobago 15 (Telfer 10, 21, Joseph 14, 27, 31, 33, 47, Guerra 15, 42, N Lewis 20, 40, Lester 62, D Lewis 75, 79, J Williams 89)
Anguilla 0
HT: 10-0. **Ref:** Harris (T&T)

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP

Played in Brazil

Group A

Oct 26: Brazil 4 Canada 1; New Zealand 1 Angola 2.
Oct 29: Angola 2 Canada 1; Brazil 3 New Zealand 0.
Nov 1: Angola 0 Brazil 2; Canada 0 New Zealand 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	1	9
Angola (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
New Zealand	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Canada	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

Group B

Oct 26: Nigeria 4 Hungary 2; Ecuador 2 Australia 1.
Oct 29: Nigeria 3 Ecuador 2; Australia 2 Hungary 2.
Nov 1: Australia 2 Nigeria 1; Hungary 2 Ecuador 3.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria (Q)	3	2	0	1	8	6	6
Ecuador (Q)	3	2	0	1	7	6	6
Australia (Q)	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Hungary	3	0	1	2	6	9	1

Group C

Oct 27: France 2 Chile 0; South Korea 2 Haiti 1.
Oct 30: South Korea 1 France 3; Chile 4 Haiti 2.
Nov 2: Haiti 0 France 2; Chile 1 South Korea 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Sth Korea (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Chile (Q)	3	1	0	2	5	6	3
Haiti	3	0	0	3	3	8	0

Group D

Oct 27: United States 1 Senegal 4; Japan 3 Holland 0.
Oct 30: Holland 1 Senegal 3; United States 0 Japan 0.
Nov 2: Senegal 0 Japan 1; Holland 4 United States 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Senegal (Q)	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Holland (Q)	3	1	0	2	5	6	3
United States	3	0	1	2	1	8	1

Group E

Oct 28: Spain 0 Argentina 0; Tajikistan 1 Cameroon 0.
Oct 31: Spain 5 Tajikistan 1; Cameroon 1 Argentina 3.
Nov 3: Cameroon 0 Spain 2; Argentina 3 Tajikistan 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain (Q)	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Argentina (Q)	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Tajikistan	3	1	0	2	3	8	3
Cameroon	3	0	0	3	1	6	0

Group F

Oct 28: Solomon Islands 0 Italy 5; Paraguay 0 Mexico 0.
Oct 31: Solomon Islands 0 Paraguay 7; Mexico 1 Italy 2.
Nov 3: Italy 1 Paraguay 2; Mexico 8 Solomon Islands 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paraguay (Q)	3	2	1	0	9	1	7
Italy (Q)	3	2	0	1	8	3	6
Mexico (Q)	3	1	1	1	9	2	4
Solomon Is	3	0	0	3	0	20	0

● *The top 2 in each group and the 4 3rd-placed teams with the best record qualified for the round of16*

Round of 16

Nov 5: Angola 0 South Korea 1; Nigeria 1 Holland 3.
Nov 6: Japan 0 Mexico 2; Spain 2 Senegal 1; Brazil 3 Chile 2; France 4 Australia 0.
Nov 7: Ecuador 0 Italy 1; Paraguay 3 Argentina 2.

Quarter-finals

Nov 10: Holland 4 Paraguay 1; South Korea 0 Mexico 1.
Nov 11: Spain 1 France 6; Italy 0 Brazil 2.

Semi-finals

Nov14 - Brasilia
Mexico 1 (Alvarez 79)
Holland 1 (Munoz og 74)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,122. **Ref:** Guerrero (Ecu)
Mexico 4-3 on pens
Mexico: Garcia - Ruiz (Lara 18), Guzman, A Gomez, R Martinez, J Martinez, Pizzuto, Gonzalez, Luna (Alvarez 73), El Mesmari (Joel Gomez 46), Munoz.
Holland: Raatsie - Van der Sloot, Bogarde, Rensch, Salah Eddine, Regeer, Maatsen, Hansen, Taabouni, Unuvar, Braaf.

Nov14 - Brasilia
France 2 (Kalimuendo 7, Mbuku 13)
Brazil 3 (Kaio Jorge 62, Veron 76, Lazaro 89)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 13,587. **Ref:** Cisneros (ESv)
France: Zinga - Soppy, Kouassi, Matsima, Pembele, Ahamada, Millot (Hassan 76), Lihadji, Aouchiche, Mbuku, Kalimuendo (Lepenant 68).
Brazil: Matheus Donelli - Yan Couto (Sandry 83), Henri, Luan Patrick, Patryck, Diego (Lazaro 71), Daniel Cabral, Pedro Lucas (Garcia 56), Veron, Kaio Jorge, Peglow.

3rd-place match

Nov17 - Brasilia
Holland 1 (Taabouni 15)
France 3 (Kalimuendo 22, 54, 62)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 1,232. **Ref:** Ekberg (Swe)

Final

Nov17 - Brasilia
Mexico 1 (Gonzalez 66)
Brazil 2 (Kaio Jorge pen 84, Lazaro 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,843. **Ref:** Treimanis (Lat)
Mexico: Garcia - Lara, Guzman, A Gomez, R Martinez, J Martinez, Pizzuto, Luna (El Mesmari 90+1), Alvarez (Avila 56), Gonzalez, Munoz (Joel Gomez 76).
Brazil: Matheus Donelli - Yan Couto (Garcia 90+4), Henri, Luan Patrick, Patryck, Diego, Daniel Cabral, Pedro Lucas (Matheus Araujo 56), Veron, Kaio Jorge, Peglow (Lazaro 71).

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions
(R) = relegated
(Q) = qualified for next stage

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GERMANY: BUNDESLIGA 2019-20

AUGSBURG

GOALKEEPERS
13 Fabian **GIEFER** (29) 17.05.90
21 Tomas **KOUBEK** (CzR) (27) 26.08.92
39 Benjamin **LENEIS** (20) 08.03.99
1 Andreas **LUTHE** (32) 10.03.87

DEFENDERS
26 Simon **ASTA** (18) 25.01.01
32 Raphael **FRAMBERGER** (24) 06.09.95
4 Felix **GOTZE** (21) 11.02.98
6 Jeffrey **GOUWELEEUW** (Hol) (28) 10.07.91
22 **IAGO** (Bra) (22) 23.03.97
18 Tin **JEDVAJ** (Cro) (24) 28.11.95
2 Stephan **LICHTSTEINER** (Swi) (35) 16.01.84
31 Philipp **MAX** (26) 30.09.93
36 Reece **OXFORD** (Eng) (20) 16.12.98
15 Jozo **STANIC** (Cro) (20) 06.04.99
5 Marek **SUCHY** (CzR) (31) 29.03.88
19 Felix **UDUOKHAI** (22) 09.09.97
3 Mads **VALENTIN** (Den) (23) 01.09.96

MIDFIELDERS
10 Daniel **BAIER** (35) 18.05.84
11 Michael **GREGORITSCH** (Aut) (25) 18.04.94
25 Carlos **GRUEZO** (Ecu) (24) 19.04.95
28 Andre **HAHN** (29) 13.08.90
24 Fredrik **JENSEN** (Fin) (22) 09.09.97
8 Rani **KHEDIRA** (25) 27.01.94
14 Jan **MORAVEK** (CzR) (30) 01.11.89
43 Stefano **RUSSO** (19) 29.06.00
17 Noah **SARENREN** (Nga) (23) 21.08.96
34 Georg **TEIGL** (Aut) (28) 09.02.91

FORWARDS
35 **CHEON** Seong-hoon (NKo) (19) 21.09.00
9 Sergio **CORDOVA** (Ven) (22) 09.08.97
27 Alfred **FINNBOGASON** (Ice) (30) 01.02.89
37 Maurice **MALONE** (19) 17.08.00
7 Florian **NIEDERLECHNER** (29) 24.10.90
23 Marco **RICHTER** (22) 24.11.97
20 Julian **SCHIEBER** (30) 13.02.89
16 Ruben **VARGAS** (Swi) (21) 05.08.98

COACH
Martin **SCHMIDT** (Swi) (52) 12.04.67

BAYER LEVERKUSEN

GOALKEEPERS
1 Lukas **HRADECKY** (Fin) (30) 24.11.89
36 Niklas **LOMB** (26) 28.07.93
28 Ramazan **OZCAN** (Aut) (35) 28.06.84

DEFENDERS
5 Sven **BENDER** (30) 27.04.89
6 Aleksandar **DRAGOVIC** (Aut) (28) 06.03.91
3 Panagiotis **RETSOS** (Gre) (21) 09.08.98
22 Daley **SINKGRAVEN** (Hol) (24) 04.07.95
4 Jonathan **TAH** (23) 11.02.96
23 Mitchell **WEISER** (25) 21.04.94
18 **WENDELL** (Bra) (26) 20.07.93

MIDFIELDERS
11 Nadiem **AMIRI** (23) 27.10.96
20 Charles **ARANGUIZ** (Chl) (30) 17.04.89
15 Julian **BAUMGARTLINGER** (Aut) (31) 02.01.88
38 Karim **BELLARABI** (29) 08.04.90
8 Lars **BENDER** (30) 27.04.89
10 Kerem **DEMIRBAY** (26) 03.07.93
29 Kai **HAVERTZ** (20) 11.06.99
30 Adrian **STANILEWICZ** (Pol) (19) 22.02.00

FORWARDS
13 Lucas **ALARIO** (Arg) (27) 08.10.92
9 Leon **BAILEY** (Jam) (22) 09.08.97
19 Moussa **DIABY** (FRa) (20) 07.07.99
7 **PAULINHO** (Bra) (19) 15.07.00
17 Joel **POHJANPALO** (Fin) (25) 13.09.94
31 Kevin **VOLLAND** (27) 30.07.92

COACH
Peter **BOSZ** (Hol) (56) 21.11.63

BAYERN MUNICH

GOALKEEPERS
36 Christian **FRUCHTL** (19) 28.01.00
39 Ron-Thorben **HOFFMANN** (20) 04.04.99
1 Manuel **NEUER** (33) 27.03.86
26 Sven **ULREICH** (31) 03.08.88

DEFENDERS
27 David **ALABA** (Aut) (27) 24.06.92
17 Jerome **BOATENG** (31) 03.09.88
21 Lucas **HERNANDEZ** (Fra) (23) 14.02.96
32 Joshua **KIMMICH** (24) 08.02.95
33 Lars Lukas **MAI** (19) 31.03.00
5 Benjamin **PAVARD** (Fra) (23) 28.03.96
4 Niklas **SULE** (24) 03.09.95

MIDFIELDERS
10 Philippe **COUTINHO** (Bra) (27) 12.06.92
11 Mickael **CUISANCE** (Fra) (20) 16.08.99
19 Alphonso **DAVIES** (Can) (19) 02.11.00
22 Serge **GNABRY** (24) 14.07.95
18 Leon **GORETZKA** (24) 06.02.95
8 Javi **MARTINEZ** (Spa) (31) 02.09.88
14 Ivan **PERISIC** (Cro) (30) 02.02.89
28 Sarpeet **SINGH** (NZ) (20) 20.02.99
6 **THIAGO** Alcantara (Spa) (28) 11.04.91
24 Corentin **TOLISSO** (Fra) (25) 03.08.94
37 Paul **WILL** (20) 01.03.99

FORWARDS
15 Jann-Fiete **ARP** (19) 06.01.00
29 Kingsley **COMAN** (Fra) (23) 13.06.96
30 Ryan **JOHANSSON** (Lux) (18) 15.02.01
9 Robert **LEWANDOWSKI** (Pol) (31) 21.08.88
25 Thomas **MULLER** (30) 13.09.89
38 Okyere **WRIEDT** (Gha) (25) 10.07.94
35 Joshua **ZIRKZEE** (Hol) (18) 22.05.01

INTERIM COACH
Hans-Dieter **FLICK** (54) 24.02.65

Move...Benjamin Pavard joined Bayern from Stuttgart in the summer

BOR DORTMUND

GOALKEEPERS
1 Roman **BURKI** (Swi) (29) 14.11.90
35 Marwin **HITZ** (Swi) (32) 18.09.87
40 Eric **OELSCHLAGEL** (24) 20.09.95
25 Luca **UNBEHAUN** (18) 27.02.01

DEFENDERS
16 Manuel **AKANJI** (Swi) (24) 19.07.95
18 Leonardo **BALERDI** (Arg) (20) 26.01.99
13 Raphael **GUERREIRO** (Por) (25) 22.12.93
5 Achraf **HAKIMI** (Mor) (21) 04.11.98
15 Mats **HUMMELS** (30) 16.12.88
22 Mateu **MOREY** (Spa) (19) 02.03.00
26 Lukasz **PISZCZEK** (Pol) (34) 03.06.85
29 Marcel **SCHMELZER** (31) 22.01.88
14 Nico **SCHULZ** (26) 01.04.93
2 Dan-Axel **ZAGADOU** (Fra) (20) 03.06.99

MIDFIELDERS
19 Julian **BRANDT** (23) 02.05.96
8 Mahmoud **DAHOUD** (23) 01.01.96
6 Thomas **DELANEY** (Den) (28) 03.09.91
10 Mario **GOTZE** (27) 03.06.92
23 Thorgan **HAZARD** (Blg) (26) 29.03.93
37 Tobias **RASCHL** (19) 21.02.00
7 Jadon **SANCHO** (Eng) (19) 25.03.00
33 Julian **WEIGL** (24) 08.09.95
28 Axel **WITSEL** (Blg) (30) 12.01.89

FORWARDS
9 Paco **ALCACER** (Spa) (26) 30.08.93
34 Jacob **BRUUN LARSEN** (Den) (21) 19.09.98
11 Marco **REUS** (30) 31.05.89

COACH
Lucien **FAVRE** (Swi) (62) 02.11.57

B M'GLADBACH

GOALKEEPERS
31 Max **GRUN** (32) 05.04.87
21 Tobias **SIPPEL** (31) 22.03.88
1 Yann **SOMMER** (Swi) (30) 17.12.88

DEFENDERS
38 Marcel **BENGER** (21) 02.07.98
25 Ramy **BENSEBAINI** (Alg) (24) 16.04.95
15 Louis **BEYER** (19) 19.05.00
4 Mamadou **DOUCOURE** (Fra) (21) 21.05.98
30 Nico **ELVEDI** (Swi) (23) 30.09.96
28 Matthias **GINTER** (25) 19.01.94
24 Tony **JANTSCHKE** (29) 07.04.90
18 Stefan **LAINER** (Aut) (27) 27.08.92
40 Andreas **POULSEN** (Den) (20) 13.10.99
17 Oscar **WENDT** (Swe) (34) 24.10.85

MIDFIELDERS
22 Laszlo **BENES** (Slk) (22) 09.09.97
39 Aaron **HERZOG** (21) 30.01.98
7 Patrick **HERRMANN** (28) 12.02.91
23 Jonas **HOFMANN** (27) 14.07.92
19 Fabian **JOHNSON** (USA) (31) 11.12.87
6 Christoph **KRAMER** (28) 19.02.91
26 Torben **MUSEL** (20) 25.07.99
32 Florian **NEUHAUS** (22) 16.03.97
5 Tobias **STROBL** (29) 12.05.90
16 Ibrahima **TRAORE** (Gui) (31) 21.04.88
8 Denis **ZAKARIA** (Swi) (23) 20.11.96

FORWARDS
37 Keanan **BENNETTS** (Eng) (20) 09.03.99
36 Breel **EMBOLO** (Swi) (22) 14.02.97
44 Charalampos **MAKRIDIS** (Gre) (23) 05.07.96
34 Conor **NOSS** (18) 01.01.01
14 Alassane **PLEA** (Fra) (26) 10.03.93
11 **RAFFAEL** (Bra) (34) 28.03.85
13 Lars **STINDL** (31) 26.08.88
10 Marcus **THURAM** (Fra) (22) 06.08.97
20 Julio **VILLALBA** (Par) (21) 11.09.98

COACH
Marco **ROSE** (43) 11.09.76

COLOGNE

GOALKEEPERS
1 Timo **HORN** (26) 12.05.93
18 Thomas **KESSLER** (33) 20.01.86
32 Julian **KRAHL** (19) 22.01.00
31 Brady **SCOTT** (USA) (20) 30.06.99

DEFENDERS
35 Matthias **BADER** (22) 17.06.97
33 Sebastiaan **BORNAUW** (Blg) (20) 22.03.99
5 Rafael **CZICHOS** (29) 14.05.90
19 Kingsley **EHIZIBUE** (Hol) (24) 25.05.95
14 Jonas **HECTOR** (29) 27.05.90
34 Noah **KATTERBACH** (18) 13.04.01
22 Jorge **MERE** (Spa) (22) 17.04.97
2 Benno **SCHMITZ** (25) 17.11.94
3 Lasse **SOBIECH** (28) 18.01.91

MIDFIELDERS
39 Darko **CHURLINOV** (NMa) (19) 11.07.00
17 Christian **CLEMENS** (28) 04.08.91
24 Dominick **DREXLER** (29) 26.05.90
36 Niklas **HAUPTMANN** (23) 27.06.96
6 Marco **HOGER** (30) 16.09.89
30 Florian **KAINZ** (Aut) (27) 24.10.92
21 Vincent **KOZIELLO** (Fra) (24) 28.10.95
7 Marcel **RISSE** (29) 17.12.89
13 Louis **SCHAUB** (Aut) (24) 29.12.94
11 Kingsley **SCHINDLER** (26) 12.07.93
28 Ellyes **SKHIRI** (Tun) (24) 10.05.95
8 Birger **VERSTRAETE** (Blg) (25) 16.04.94

FORWARDS
15 Jhon **CORDOBA** (Col) (26) 11.05.93
27 Anthony **MODESTE** (Fra) (31) 14.04.88
9 Simon **TERODDE** (31) 02.03.88

COACH
Markus **GISDOL** (50) 17.08.69

EINT FRANKFURT

GOALKEEPERS
32 Frederik **RONNOW** (Den) (27) 04.08.92
1 Kevin **TRAPP** (29) 08.07.90
29 Felix **WIEDWALD** (29) 15.03.90
37 Jan **ZIMMERMANN** (34) 19.04.85

DEFENDERS
19 David **ABRAHAM** (Arg) (33) 16.07.86
22 Timothy **CHANDLER** (USA) (29) 29.03.90
24 Danny **DA COSTA** (26) 13.07.93
25 Erik **DURM** (27) 12.05.92
3 Simon **FALETTE** (Gui) (27) 19.02.92
13 Martin **HINTEREGGER** (Aut) (27) 07.09.92
2 Evan **N'DICKA** (Fra) (20) 20.08.99
23 Marco **RUSS** (34) 04.08.85
18 Almamy **TOURE** (Fra) (23) 28.04.96

MIDFIELDERS
42 Marjan **CAVAR** (Bos) (21) 02.02.98
30 Sahverdi **CETIN** (19) 28.09.00
6 Jonathan **DE GUZMAN** (Hol) (32) 13.09.87
5 Gelson **FERNANDES** (Swi) (33) 02.09.86
38 Patrick **FINGER** (18) 01.01.01
11 Mijat **GACINOVIC** (Bos) (24) 08.02.95
20 Makoto **HASEBE** (Jap) (35) 18.01.84
15 Daichi **KAMADA** (Jap) (23) 05.08.96
28 Dominik **KOHR** (25) 31.01.94
10 Filip **KOSTIC** (Ser) (27) 01.11.92
17 Sebastian **RODE** (29) 11.10.90
8 Djibril **SOW** (Swi) (22) 06.02.97
26 Nils **STENDERA** (19) 30.09.00
16 Lucas **TORRO** (Spa) (25) 19.07.94

FORWARDS
9 Bas **DOST** (Hol) (30) 31.05.89
7 Dejan **JOVELJIC** (Ser) (20) 07.08.99
39 Goncalo **PACIENCIA** (Por) (25) 01.08.94
33 Andre **SILVA** (Por) (24) 06.11.95

COACH
Adi **HUTTER** (Aut) (49) 11.02.70

FOR DUSSELDORF

GOALKEEPERS
33 Florian **KASTENMEIER** (22) 28.06.97
1 Michael **RENSING** (35) 14.05.84
24 Zack **STEFFEN** (USA) (24) 02.04.95
38 Tim **WIESNER** (23) 21.11.96
30 Raphael **WOLF** (31) 06.06.88

DEFENDERS
5 Kaan **AYHAN** (Tur) (25) 10.11.94
13 Adam **BODZEK** (Pol) (34) 07.09.85
32 Robin **BORMUTH** (24) 18.09.95
26 Diego **CONTENTO** (29) 01.05.90
23 Niko **GIESSELMANN** (28) 26.09.91
3 Andre **HOFFMANN** (26) 28.02.93
4 Kasim **NUHU** (Gha) (24) 22.06.95
- Georgios **SIADAS** (19) 27.12.99
35 Michel **STOCKER** (20) 14.04.99
29 Markus **SUTTNER** (Aut) (32) 16.04.87

MIDFIELDERS
27 Nana **AMPOMAH** (Gha) (23) 02.01.96
36 Shinta **APPELKAMP** (Jap) (19) 01.11.00
34 Lewis **BAKER** (Eng) (24) 25.04.95
8 Aymen **BARKOK** (21) 21.05.98
40 Johannes **BUHLER** (22) 26.07.97
7 Oliver **FINK** (37) 06.06.82
19 Davor **LOVREN** (Cro) (21) 03.10.98
6 Alfredo **MORALES** (USA) (29) 12.05.90
14 Kelvin **OFORI** (Gha) (18) 27.07.01
18 Thomas **PLEDL** (25) 23.05.94
22 Kevin **STOGER** (Aut) (26) 27.08.93
31 Marcel **SOBOTTKA** (25) 25.04.94
15 Erik **THOMMY** (25) 20.08.94
39 Jean **ZIMMER** (25) 06.12.93
25 Matthias **ZIMMERMANN** (27) 16.06.92

FORWARDS
28 Rouwen **HENNINGS** (32) 28.08.87
11 Kenan **KARAMAN** (Tur) (25) 05.03.94
9 Dawid **KOWNACKI** (Pol) (22) 14.03.97
37 Bernard **TEKPETEY** (Gha) (22) 03.09.97

COACH
Friedhelm **FUNKEL** (65) 10.12.53

FREIBURG

GOALKEEPERS
26 Mark **FLEKKEN** (Hol) (26) 13.06.93
1 Alexander **SCHWOLOW** (27) 02.06.92
40 Niclas **THIEDE** (20) 14.04.99

DEFENDERS
5 Manuel **GULDE** (28) 12.02.91
30 Christian **GUNTER** (26) 28.02.93
23 Dominique **HEINTZ** (26) 15.08.93
24 Gian-Luca **ITTER** (20) 05.01.99
25 Robin **KOCH** (23) 17.07.96
17 Lukas **KUBLER** (27) 30.08.92
3 Philipp **LIENHART** (Aut) (23) 11.07.96
4 Nico **SCHLOTTERBECK** (19) 01.12.99

MIDFIELDERS
6 Amir **ABRASHI** (Alb) (29) 27.03.90
8 Mike **FRANTZ** (33) 14.10.86
20 Jerome **GONDORF** (31) 26.06.88
32 Vincenzo **GRIFO** (Ita) (26) 07.04.93
19 Janik **HABERER** (25) 02.04.94
27 Nicolas **HOFLER** (29) 09.03.90
38 Florian **KATH** (25) 21.10.94
28 **KWON** Chang-Hoon (SKo) (25) 30.06.94
16 Yoric **RAVET** (Fra) (30) 12.09.89
7 Jonathan **SCHMID** (Fra) (29) 22.06.90
34 Lino **TEMPELMANN** (20) 02.02.99

FORWARDS
21 Brandon **BORRELLO** (Aus) (24) 25.07.95
9 Lucas **HOLER** (25) 10.07.94
29 **JEONG** Woo-yeong (SKo) (20) 20.09.99
18 Nils **PETERSEN** (30) 06.12.88
22 Roland **SALLAI** (Hun) (22) 22.05.97
13 Marco **TERRAZZINO** (28) 15.04.91
11 Luca **WALDSCHMIDT** (23) 19.05.96

COACH
Christian **STREICH** (54) 11.06.65

HERTHA BERLIN

GOALKEEPERS

22 Rune **JARSTEIN** (Nor) (35) 29.09.84
1 Thomas **KRAFT** (31) 22.07.88
12 Dennis **SMARSCH** (20) 14.01.99

DEFENDERS

29 Florian **BAAK** (20) 18.03.99
20 Dedryck **BOYATA** (Blg) (29) 28.11.90
13 Lukas **KLUNTER** (23) 26.05.96
17 Maximilian **MITTELSTADT** (22) 18.03.97
2 Peter **PEKARIK** (Slk) (33) 30.10.86
21 Marvin **PLATTENHARDT** (27) 26.01.92
4 Karim **REKIK** (Hol) (24) 02.12.94
5 Niklas **STARK** (24) 14.04.95
25 Jordan **TORUNARIGHA** (22) 07.08.97

MIDFIELDERS

39 Julian **ALBRECHT** (18) 31.08.01
34 Maurice **COVIC** (21) 17.04.98
6 Vladimir **DARIDA** (CzR) (29) 08.08.90
16 Javairo **DILROSUN** (Hol) (21) 22.06.98
10 Ondrej **DUDA** (Slk) (24) 15.12.94
26 Sidney **FRIEDE** (21) 12.04.98
15 Marko **GRUJIC** (Ser) (23) 13.04.96
11 Mathew **LECKIE** (Aus) (28) 04.02.91
7 Eduard **LOWEN** (22) 28.01.97
23 Arne **MAIER** (20) 08.01.99
3 Per Ciljan **SKJELBREID** (Nor) (32) 16.06.87

FORWARDS

24 Palko **DARDAI** (20) 24.04.99
9 Alexander **ESSWEIN** (29) 25.03.90
19 Vedad **IBISEVIC** (Bos) (35) 06.08.84
32 Dennis **JASTRZEMBSKI** (19) 20.02.00
8 Salomon **KALOU** (IvC) (34) 05.08.85
36 Muhammed **KIPRIT** (Tur) (20) 09.07.99
14 Pascal **KOPKE** (24) 03.09.95
28 Dodi **LUKEBAKIO** (Blg) (22) 24.09.97
33 Daishawn **REDAN** (Hol) (18) 02.02.01
27 Davie **SELKE** (24) 20.01.95
30 Marius **WOLF** (24) 27.05.95

COACH

Ante **COVIC** (Cro) (44) 31.08.75

HOFFENHEIM

GOALKEEPERS

1 Oliver **BAUMANN** (29) 02.06.90
12 Philipp **PENTKE** (34) 01.05.85
33 Alexander **STOLZ** (36) 13.10.83

DEFENDERS

25 Kevin **AKPOGUMA** (24) 19.04.95
4 Ermin **BICAKCIC** (Bos) (29) 24.01.90
2 Joshua **BRENET** (Hol) (25) 20.03.94
21 Benjamin **HUBNER** (30) 04.07.89
3 Pavel **KADERABEK** (CzR) (27) 25.04.92
38 Stefan **POSCH** (Aut) (22) 14.05.97
31 Lucas **RIBEIRO** (Bra) (20) 19.01.99
5 Kostas **STAFYLIDIS** (Gre) (26) 02.12.93

MIDFIELDERS

14 Christoph **BAUMGARTNER** (Aut) (20) 01.08.99
8 Dennis **GEIGER** (21) 10.06.98
11 Florian **GRILLITSCH** (Aut) (24) 07.08.95
6 Havard **NORDTVEIT** (Nor) (29) 21.06.90
30 Philipp **OCHS** (22) 17.04.97
16 Sebastian **RUDY** (29) 28.02.90
7 Lukas **RUPP** (28) 08.01.91
18 Diadie **SAMASSEKOU** (Mli)(23) 11.01.96
22 Kevin **VOGT** (28) 23.09.91
17 Steven **ZUBER** (Swi) (28) 17.08.91
20 Robert **ZULJ** (Aut) (27) 05.02.92

FORWARDS

23 Sargis **ADAMYAN** (Arm) (26) 23.05.93
9 Ihias **BEBOU** (Tog) (25) 23.04.94
19 Ishak **BELFODIL** (Alg) (27) 12.01.92
27 Andrej **KRAMARIC** (Cro) (28) 19.06.91
37 Jurgen **LOCADIA** (Hol) (26) 07.11.93
29 Robert **SKOV** (Den) (23) 20.05.96

COACH

Alfred **SCHREUDER** (Hol) (47) 02.11.72

MAINZ

GOALKEEPERS

37 Finn **DAHMEN** (21) 27.03.98
33 Omer **HANIN** (Isr) (21) 14.05.98
1 Florian **MULLER** (22) 13.11.97
27 Robin **ZENTNER** (25) 28.10.94

DEFENDERS

16 Stefan **BELL** (28) 24.08.91
18 Daniel **BROSINSKI** (31) 17.07.88
31 Ahmet **GURLEYEN** (20) 26.04.99
42 Alexander **HACK** (26) 08.09.93
32 Niklas **KOLLE** (20) 17.11.99
3 Aaron **MARTIN** (Spa) (22) 22.04.97
17 Jonathan **MEIER** (20) 11.11.99
23 Phillipp **MWENE** (Aut) (25) 29.01.94
19 Moussa **NIAKHATE** (Fra) (23) 08.03.96
2 Ronael **PIERRE-GABRIEL** (Fra) (21) 13.06.98
4 Jerry **ST JUSTE** (Hol) (23) 19.10.96

MIDFIELDERS

34 Bote **BAKU** (21) 08.04.98
35 Leandro **BARREIRO** (Lux) (19) 03.01.00
5 Jean-Paul **BOETIUS** (Hol) (25) 22.03.94
38 Erkan **EYIBIL** (18) 15.06.01
20 Edimilson **FERNANDES** (Swi) (23) 15.04.96
14 Pierre **KUNDE** (Cam) (24) 26.07.95
6 Danny **LATZA** (29) 07.12.89
10 Alexandru **MAXIM** (Rom) (29) 08.07.90
8 Levin **OZTUNALI** (23) 15.03.96

FORWARDS

30 Cyrill **AKONO** (19) 29.01.00
22 Taiwo **AWONIYI** (Nga) (22) 12.08.97
29 Jonathan **BURKARDT** (19) 01.07.00
11 **JI** Dong-Won (SKo) (28) 28.05.91
9 Jean-Philippe **MATETA** (Fra) (22) 28.06.97
21 Karim **ONISIWO** (Aut) (27) 17.03.92
7 Robin **QUAISON** (Swe) (26) 09.10.93
36 Aaron **SEYDEL** (23) 07.02.96
28 Adam **SZALAI** (Hun) (31) 09.12.87

COACH

Achim **BEIERLORZER** (52) 20.11.67

RB LEIPZIG

GOALKEEPERS

1 Peter **GULACSI** (Hun) (29) 06.05.90
28 Yvon **MVOGO** (Swi) (25) 06.06.94
32 Tim **SCHREIBER** (17) 24.04.02
33 Philipp **TSCHAUNER** (34) 03.11.85

DEFENDERS

26 Ethan **AMPADU** (Wal) (19) 14.09.00
36 Luan **CANDIDO** (Bra) (18) 02.02.01
23 Marcel **HALSTENBERG** (28) 27.09.91
16 Lukas **KLOSTERMANN** (23) 03.06.96
6 Ibrahima **KONATE** (Fra) (20) 25.05.99
22 Nordi **MUKIELE** (Fra) (22) 01.11.97
4 Willi **ORBAN** (Hun) (27) 03.11.92
3 Marcelo **SARACCHI** (Uru) (21) 23.04.98
5 Dayot **UPAMECANO** (Fra) (21) 27.10.98

MIDFIELDERS

14 Tyler **ADAMS** (USA) (20) 14.02.99
31 Diego **DEMME** (28) 21.11.91
10 Emil **FORSBERG** (Swe) (28) 23.10.91
8 Amadou **HAIDARA** (Mli) (21) 31.01.98
13 Stefan **ILSANKER** (Aut) (30) 18.05.89
44 Kevin **KAMPL** (Sln) (29) 09.10.90
53 Tom **KRAUSS** (18) 22.06.01
27 Konrad **LAIMER** (Aut) (22) 27.05.97
18 Chrsitopher **NKUNKU** (Fra) (22) 14.11.97
7 Marcel **SABITZER** (Aut) (25) 17.03.94

FORWARDS

20 Matheus **CUNHA** (Bra) (20) 27.05.99
17 Ademola **LOOKMAN** (Eng) (22) 20.10.97
9 Yussuf **POULSEN** (Den) (25) 15.06.94
21 Patrik **SCHICK** (CzR) (23) 24.01.96
11 Timo **WERNER** (23) 06.03.96
19 Hannes **WOLF** (Aut) (20) 16.04.99

COACH

Julian **NAGELSMANN** (32) 23.07.87

PADERBORN

GOALKEEPERS

34 Leon **BRUGGEMEIER** (22) 23.08.97
21 Jannik **HUTH** (25) 15.04.94
1 Michael **RATAJCZAK** (37) 16.04.82
17 Leopold **ZINGERLE** (25) 10.04.94

DEFENDERS

29 Jamilu **COLLINS** (Nga) (25) 05.08.94
25 Mohamed **DRAGER** (Tun) (23) 25.06.96
2 Uwe **HUNEMEIER** (33) 09.01.86
20 Laurent **JANS** (Lux) (27) 05.08.92
15 Luca **KILIAN** (20) 01.09.99
4 Jan-Luca **RUMPF** (20) 08.07.99
13 Sebastian **SCHONLAU** (25) 05.08.94
5 Christian **STROHDIEK** (31) 22.01.88

MIDFIELDERS

22 Christopher **ANTWI-ADJEI** (Gha) (25) 07.02.94
12 Dominik **BILOGREVIC** (Cro) (20) 02.01.99
10 **CAULY** (Bra) (24) 15.09.95
16 Johannes **DORFLER** (23) 23.08.96
8 Klaus **GJASULA** (Alb) (29) 14.12.89
33 Marcel **HILSSNER** (24) 30.01.95
38 Gerrit **HOLTMANN** (24) 25.03.95
24 Rifet **KAPIC** (Bos) (24) 03.07.95
9 Kai **PROGER** (27) 15.05.92
7 Marlon **RITTER** (25) 15.10.94
19 Abdelhamid **SABIRI** (23) 28.11.96
39 Sebastian **VASILIADIS** (22) 04.10.97
- Massih **WASSEY** (Can) (31) 18.06.88

FORWARDS

27 Babacar **GUEYE** (Sen) (24) 31.12.94
30 Streli **MAMBA** (25) 17.06.94
11 Sven **MICHEL** (29) 15.07.90
14 Khiry **SHELTON** (USA) (26) 26.06.93
31 Ben **ZOLINSKI** (27) 03.05.92

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Steffen **BAUMGART** (47) 05.01.72

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34 Michael **LANGER** (Aut) (33) 06.01.85
35 Alexander **NUBEL** (22) 30.09.96
23 Marcus **SCHUBERT** (21) 12.06.98

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4 Ozan **KABAK** (Tur) (19) 25.03.00
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3 Juan **MIRANDA** (Spa) (19) 19.01.00
5 Matija **NASTASIC** (Ser) (25) 28.03.93
24 Bastian **OCZIPKA** (29) 12.01.89
26 Salif **SANE** (Sen) (28) 25.08.90
17 Benjamin **STAMBOULI** (Fra) (28) 13.08.90

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10 Nabil **BENTALEB** (Alg) (23) 24.11.94
18 Daniel **CALIGIURI** (30) 15.01.88
25 Amine **HARIT** (Mor) (21) 18.06.97
45 Marcel **LANGER** (22) 16.02.97
6 Omar **MASCARELL** (Spa) (25) 02.02.93
37 Munir **MERCAN** (18) 10.12.00
2 Weston **McKENNIE** (USA) (20) 28.08.98
28 Alessandro **SCHOPF** (Aut) (24) 07.02.94
8 Suat **SERDAR** (21) 11.04.7

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16 Nassim **BOUJELLAB** (20) 20.06.99
19 Guido **BURGSTALLER** (Aut) (29) 29.04.89
15 Ahmed **KUTUCU** (Tur) (19) 01.03.00
14 Rabbi **MATONDO** (Wal) (19) 09.09.00
9 Benito **RAMAN** (Blg) (25) 07.11.94
21 Fabian **REESE** (22) 29.11.97
22 Steven **SKRZYBSKI** (25) 18.11.92
7 Mark **UTH** (27) 24.08.91

COACH

David **WAGNER** (USA) (48) 19.10.71

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12 Jakob **BUSK** (Den) (26) 12.09.93
1 Rafal **GIKIEWICZ** (Pol) (32) 26.10.87
35 Moritz **NICOLAS** (22) 21.10.97

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5 Marvin **FRIEDRICH** (23) 13.12.95
19 Florian **HUBNER** (28) 01.03.91
25 Christopher **LENZ** (25) 22.09.94
33 Lennard **MALONEY** (USA) (20) 08.10.99
18 Nicolai **RAPP** (22) 13.12.96
14 Ken **REICHEL** (32) 19.12.86
6 Julian **RYERSON** (Nor) (22) 17.11.97
31 Keven **SCHLOTTERBECK** (22) 28.04.97
3 Neven **SUBOTIC** (Ser) (30) 10.12.88
28 Christopher **TRIMMEL** (Aut) (32) 24.02.87

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30 Robert **ANDRICH** (25) 22.09.94
15 Marius **BULTER** (26) 29.03.93
17 Florian **FLECKER** (Aut) (24) 29.10.95
34 Christian **GENTNER** (34) 14.08.85
7 Akaki **GOGIA** (27) 18.01.92
26 Julius **KADE** (20) 20.05.99
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40 Maurice **OPFERMANN** (19) 16.06.00
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20 Suleiman **ABDULLAHI** (Nga) (22) 10.12.96
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COACH

Urs **FISCHER** (53) 20.02.66

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27 Stefanos **KAPINO** (Gre) (25) 18.03.94
1 Jir **PAVLENKA** (CzR) (27) 14.03.92
40 Luca **PLOGMANN** (19) 10.03.00

DEFENDERS

5 Ludwig **AUGUSTINSSON** (Swe) (25) 21.04.94
32 Marco **FRIEDL** (Aut) (21) 16.03.98
23 Theodor **GEBRE SELASSIE** (CzR) (32) 24.12.86
4 Michael **LANG** (Swi) (28) 08.02.91
15 Sebastian **LANGKAMP** (31) 15.01.88
18 Niklas **MOISANDER** (Fin) (34) 29.09.85
21 Omer **TOPRAK** (Tur) (30) 21.07.89
13 Milos **VELJKOVIC** (Ser) (24) 26.09.95
37 Niklas **WIEMANN** (20) 23.02.99

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44 Philipp **BARGFREDE** (30) 03.03.89
22 Fin **BARTELS** (32) 07.02.87
10 Leonardo **BITTENCOURT** (25) 19.12.93
35 Maximilian **EGGESTEIN** (22) 08.12.96
39 Benjamin **GOLLER** (20) 01.01.99
36 Christian **GROSS** (30) 08.02.89
30 Davy **KLAASSEN** (Hol) (26) 21.02.93
6 Kevin **MOHWALD** (26) 03.07.93
7 Milot **RASHICA** (Kos) (23) 28.06.96
17 Nuri **SAHIN** (Tur) (31) 05.09.88
26 Simon **STRAUDI** (Ita) (20) 27.01.99

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24 Johannes **EGGESTEIN** (21) 08.05.98
11 Niclas **FULLKRUG** (26) 09.02.93
29 Luc **IHORST** (19) 07.03.00
8 Yuya **OSAKO** (Jap) (29) 18.05.90
14 Claudio **PIZARRO** (Per) (41) 03.10.78
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41 Nick **WOLTEMADE** (17) 14.02.02

COACH

Florian **KOHFELDT** (37) 05.10.82

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1 Koen **CASTEELS** (Blg) (26) 25.06.92
35 Lino **KASTEN** (18) 17.01.01
30 Niklas **KLINGER** (24) 13.10.95
36 Phillip **MENZEL** (20) 18.08.98
12 Pavao **PERVAN** (Aut) (30) 13.11.87

DEFENDERS

25 John **BROOKS** (USA) (25) 28.01.93
5 Jeffrey **BRUMA** (Hol) (26) 13.11.91
13 Yannick **GERHARDT** (24) 13.03.94
31 Robin **KNOCHE** (26) 22.05.92
19 Kevin **MBABU** (Swi) (24) 19.04.95
6 Paulo **OTAVIO** (Bra) (24) 23.11.94
15 Jerome **ROUSSILLON** (Fra)(25) 06.01.93
32 Marcel **TISSERAND** (DRC) (25) 10.01.93
2 **WILLIAM** (Bra) (23) 03.04.95

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27 Maximilian **ARNOLD** (24) 27.05.94
38 Ismail **AZZAOUI** (Blg) (20) 06.01.98
7 Josip **BREKALO** (Cro) (20) 23.06.98
4 Ignacio **CAMACHO** (Spa) (28) 04.05.90
23 Josuha **GUILAVOGUI** (Fra) (28) 19.09.90
11 Felix **KLAUS** (26) 13.09.92
10 Yunus **MALLI** (Tur) (26) 24.02.92
14 Admir **MEHMEDI** (Swi) (27) 16.03.91
37 Elvis **REXHBECAJ** (21) 01.11.97
24 Xaver **SCHLAGER** (Aut) (22) 28.09.97
8 Renato **STEFFEN** (Swi) (26) 03.11.91

FORWARDS

33 Daniel **GINCZEK** (27) 13.04.91
40 **JOAO VICTOR** (Bra) (25) 27.03.94
22 Lukas **NMECHA** (20) 14.12.98
9 Wout **WEGHORST** (Hol) (26) 07.08.92

COACH

Oliver **GLASNER** (Aut) (45) 28.08.74

Signing...Joao Victor followed coach Oliver Glasner from LASK Linz

(ages as of 29.11.19)

Derby day...Raja fans light flares at the Wydad

WYDAD v RAJA

Of all the games, in all the towns, in all the world...the Casablanca derby

Although they share the Stade Mohammed V in the heart of Casablanca, there is little else that fans of the two Moroccan giants believe they have in common.

Originally the team of the middle-classes, Wydad Athletic Club – Wydad means "love" in Arabic – are the country's most successful side, with last season's league championship being their 20th. Yet as their working-class rivals Raja Club Athletic will readily point out, WAC won five of those titles prior to 1956 and are the only team to have their titles from the colonial era recognised by the Royal Moroccan Football Federation.

Although Raja trail behind with 11 league wins, they have the bragging rights on the continental stage – with three African club championships to Wydad's two – and are the only Arab club to reach the Final of the Club World Cup, losing to Bayern Munich in 2013.

And yet for two teams with such differing backgrounds, their early days are both linked to one man: Mohamed Ben Lahcen Affani, who was better known as "Pere Jego".

A former journalist, he helped found Wydad in 1937 and as coach led the team to four domestic league titles, three North African titles and one North African Cup while surviving two assassination attempts. He left after falling out with club directors – and later became coach of Raja, who had been formed six years earlier.

Intense...Raja (left) and Wydad compete in the December 2005 derby

CLASSIC ENCOUNTERS

2001 Sep 29
Wydad's Youssef Belkhouja has a heart attack and dies on the pitch during the 100th derby.

2006 May 24
Abdellatif Jrindou puts Raja ahead with a penalty that would have been enough to win the league – until a 94th-minute long-range equaliser from Hicham Louissi means that the title goes to Wydad instead.

ON BOTH SIDES

PERE JEGO
(coach) 1940-52
(coach) 1955-68

MOUHCINE IAJOUR
2003-07, 2012-14, 2017-19
2010-12

OSCAR FULLONE
(coach) 1998-2000, 2005-06
(coach) 2002-03, 2008

FAOUZI BENZARTI
(coach) 2013-14
(coach) 2018, 2018-19

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